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Female Bonding in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*

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Abstract

The basic concern of this research is to explain how unity amidst Black women is a stepping stone in fighting against racial domination. Unities amidst Black women, who work as the maids in white families, have no option other than getting united for the sake of establishing equality and individual self-esteem. Black women like Aibileen, Minny and Skeeter have to face several hassles and hardship within the domestic world of the white ladies. From minor thing like using toilet to weekly pay, they are subjected to the serious hassles and hardships. In Kathryn Stockett's novel *The Help*, three major Black female characters help one another consistently. Eugenia Skeeter helps Aibileen, Minny and Constantine by publishing in Jackson League Daily those articles which directly deal with the harassment and segregation of Black women by their white employers. The perspective of female bonding, which lays emphasis on group identity and alliance amidst sisterhood in suffering, is the main theoretical window from which the growing alliance and unity amidst women are probed and examined critically. In this regard, it would be logically relevant to argue that female bonding is instrumental in putting an end to head of racist torture and patriarchal subjugation. In this case, this research appears as the brilliant case in point.

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I. Representation of Female Characters in *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett

This research probes into the thematic of female bonding in Kathryn Stockett's novel, *The Help*. Strong unity, harmony and cooperation amongst Black women who work in the houses of white people appear to be vital in creating conducive environment for working with dignity and nice payment. Characters like Aibileen, Constantine, Minny work in the houses of white people. They are punctual and devoted to their occupations. Despite their occupational sincerity they are subjected to the severe discriminatory practices like compulsion to use separate toilet, to use different soap. They are subdued to remain taciturn throughout their work time. Black female workers, who are hired in different houses of white people, do not have decency, dignity and humanity.

Without any fault of their own, they are intimidated. To help these women, Skeeter, another woman, writes several articles about the injustices and discriminatory overtures of the white. In this way, Skeeter makes people aware of lingering racist and discriminatory mentality of the white ladies towards their Black female employers. Black women are segregated in the houses of the white people. Black female workers, who work in white people's houses, are not allowed to use the toilet of the white people.

The Help tells the story of Jackson, Mississippi in the early 1960s, starting in 1962 and ending in 1964. These are turbulent times for the entire country but especially turbulent for the people in Jackson. For the most part those ways revolve around segregation and the mistreatment of the Negroes that live and work in a white man's town. The first to be introduced is Aibileen Clark, a fifty year old woman that has been in service nearly her entire life. Aibileen works for the Leefolt family, run by

Elizabeth Leefolt. Aibileen takes care of Mae Mobley Leefolt, a two year old girl that is neglected by a mother that does not pay attention to or care for her own child.

Aibileen will raise the child, just like she has raised 17 others. Minny Jackson is the next to be introduced. Minny is a sassy, loud, irritable black woman that works for Hilly Walters Holbrook.

Two events bring Skeeter and Aibileen even closer: Skeeter is haunted by a copy of Jim Crow laws she found in the library, and she receives a letter from a publisher in New York. Skeeter approaches Aibileen with the idea to write narratives from the point of view of 12 black maids. Aibileen reluctantly agrees, but soon finds herself as engrossed in the project as Skeeter. They meet clandestinely in the evenings at Aibileen's house to write the book together as the town's struggles with race heat up all around them. Aibileen brings in her best friend, Minny, a sassy maid who is repeatedly fired for speaking her mind, to tell her story, too.

Hearing their stories changes Skeeter as her eyes open to the true prejudices of her upbringing. Aibileen and Minny also develop a friendship and understanding with Skeeter that neither believed possible. Along the way, Skeeter learns the truth of what happened to her beloved maid, Constantine. Constantine had given birth, out of wedlock, to Lulabelle who turned out to look white even though both parents were black. Neither the black nor the white community would accept Lulabelle, so Constantine gave her up for adoption when she was four years old. When the little girl grew up, she and Constantine were reunited.

While Skeeter was away at college, Lulabelle came to visit her mother in Jackson and showed up at a party being held in Skeeter's mother's living room. When Charlotte Phelan discovered who Lulabelle was, she kicked her out and fired Constantine. Constantine had nowhere else to go, so she moved with her daughter to

Chicago and an even worse fate. Skeeter never saw Constantine again. Skeeter's book is set in the fictional town of Niceville and published anonymously. It becomes a national bestseller and, soon, the white women of Jackson begin recognizing themselves in the book's characters.

Hilly Holbrook, in particular, is set on vengeance due to the details in the book. Hilly and Skeeter grew up best friends, but they now have very different views on race and the future of integration in Mississippi. Hilly, who leads the Junior League and bosses around the other white women in the town, reveals to Stuart, Skeeter's boyfriend, that she found a copy of the Jim Crow laws in Skeeter's purse, which further ostracizes Skeeter from their community.

Tension between Skeeter and Hilly is also revealed in these chapters. They've been lifelong friends, but their relationship had changed ever since Skeeter left for college. Hilly's husband has political ambitions, and Hilly sees her role as president of the Junior League as a platform for pushing her agenda to segregate the town even more. Although Elizabeth will do anything Hilly commands in order to keep favor with her powerful friend, the distance that college provided has changed Skeeter's thinking about the way people are divided in her hometown. Skeeter asks Minny if she ever wishes things could be different, which reveals to Minny that Skeeter might not be like all the rest of the white women.

The theme of wanting is summed up best between Celia and Minny. Celia wants a baby and cannot have one. After so many miscarriages, the doctor has told her that becoming a mother is not possible for her. Minny is pregnant with her sixth child and overwhelmed with the task. Minny's family has so many struggles with poverty and violence, but babies and love are plenty. Celia is wealthy but feels empty without a child even though Johnny continues to be devoted to her. Johnny expresses

his gratitude to Minny and says Celia wouldn't be alive today if Minny hadn't nursed her through the miscarriages and called the doctor. He promises Minny that she'll always have a place in their home, and the three cry together for all that is lost and all that is gained.

The maids struggle with the irony that the children that they rear eventually will grow up to be their employers. When the white children are young, the maids have authority over them granted by their parents, but they know that the children will one day assume the position of authority. Aibileen sees it as her calling to teach the children she raises a different way to be in the world. She tries to subvert the system by planting seeds of kindness and telling secret stories of Green Martian Luther King.

When Mae Mobley begins attending a Baptist preschool her teacher tells her that black people aren't smart enough to go to school. Aibileen asks if Mae Mobley thinks Aibileen is dumb because of the color of her skin, and when Mae says "no," she also concludes that her white teacher is not always right. The teacher seems to be an enforcer of the ways of the Old South, and Mae Mobley's questioning reveals perhaps a New South to come. The theme of hope and change prevail in this chapter as the book is distributed throughout Jackson and the rest of the country. Black and white libraries are getting copies, and the maids seem proud and excited to tell their stories. Their fear of the punishment for doing so is overshadowed by their accomplishment. They feel united and powerful for having a voice.

While Elizabeth is watching the book review she is more concerned about her sorority sister's appearance than the content of what she is saying. She tells her friend on television to stop frowning because it does not make her look cute. This incident underscores Elizabeth's belief that appearances matter more than reality, and

Elizabeth is portrayed as shallow. She ignores the importance of the book's message and is stirred up only by the possible controversy.

Minnie is the best cook in town but talks back to the Holbrooks enough to get her fired. Minnie gets revenge on Hilly which haunts her until the end. The next person to be introduced is Eugenia Skeeter Phelan. Skeeter is best friends with Hilly Holbrook and Elizabeth Leefolt. The twenty- three year olds have been friends since childhood and have remained close although Skeeter is fading away from the lifestyle she once knew. Skeeter wants to be a writer more than anything but quickly learns that she is sorely under qualified for the position she applied for at Harper and Row, the famous New York publishing house. Skeeter does get advice from an editor at Harper and Row and runs with it. Mrs. Stein, the editor, tells Skeeter to write about something that disturbs her. That is what makes writing good. Skeeter begins to write about the help - the Negro servants in every white household in Jackson and across most of the South.

Skeeter is on a mission to interview maids to find out what their lives are like working for white people. Skeeter is truly interested in knowing their stories and sharing them with the world. The first person Skeeter interviews are Aibileen. Aibileen is reluctant at best but agrees to help Skeeter with the project. The relationship grows between the two women until they become good friends. Minnie is the next person to come on board to work on the project. Soon the story becomes a book and Skeeter struggles to get people to help amid all of the turmoil happening around them, including the deaths of Medgar Evers. Mae Mobley has been calling Aibileen her mama and she is getting spanked for it. Mister Leefolt also threatens to fire Aibileen if she speaks to Skeeter again.

Hilly wakes to find a front lawn full of colorful toilet bowls. Skeeter finally put the Home Health Sanitation Initiative into the League's newsletter, but she wrote that unwanted toilets could be dropped off at the Holbrook home (rather than old coats for the coat drive). Hilly is devastated and swears revenge. She kicks Skeeter out of the bridge club and makes everyone agree not to speak to her. She tells Stuart that Skeeter has ideas about changing the segregation laws in Mississippi just in case he ever thinks of dating her again.

Martin Luther King has just led the 1963 March on Washington and people are watching it on television. Aibileen is amazed by the numbers of people who attended, 250,000 and 60,000 of them were white. Then the Birmingham church bombings occur and everyone in the black community in Jackson mourns. Miss Celia shows up unannounced at Elizabeth's house and interrupts the bridge club. She offers her help with the Benefit, but the women decline and sell her tickets to attend instead. Celia lets it slip that Minny is her maid and the lie that Aibileen told about Elizabeth's recommending her is revealed. Hilly vows to get to the bottom of the story. In these chapters the world outside of Jackson, Mississippi, cannot be ignored.

As the national Civil Rights Movement becomes more organized and more vocal, the locals of Jackson don't see change coming. People seem more entrenched in keeping things the same as they always have been, and the white people of the state express a pride in their segregation, which they claim is beneficial for both white and black people. Fear is a prevailing theme in Aibileen's world. She fears losing her job (either for talking to Skeeter or for getting Minny the job at Celia's house) and is scared for what the future holds for Mae Mobley. She does not want her to grow up to be another privileged white woman who treats her help poorly.

Aibileen encourages Mae Mobley to be kind and to love regardless of skin color, but she fears that the good she is trying to teach will be undone by the racism surrounding them both. She worries that the book project will be revealed and that the maids and Skeeter will be harmed. Fear has the controlling effect of keeping people firmly entrenched in their place, but no one can control what happens behind closed doors.

The novel *The Help* has received several literary accolades and acclaims. In projecting a distinct literary voice, Stockett has succeeded in winning a large numbers of readers. It is really startling to see several issues handled tactfully in the single work. The thematic tapestry is one of the most striking aspects of this novel. Concerning to this aspect of the novel, Clara Zetkin puts forwards his view briefly:

The Help has garnered so much attention that many readers have lost objectivity in their analyses. Two contextual stances provide grounding for this essay's interrogation: first, a brief description of an academic panel held one year after Stockett's novel was published, and second, the positions of various authorities, including author Toni Morrison and visual artist Kara Walker. (87)

According to, Clara Zetkin readers are tempted to break the standard of objectivity while going through Stockett's *The Help*. The magical effects which the novel produces in the readers make them to identify with the plight and predicament of the characters. Readers are tempted towards entering into the subjective territory of characters' feelings.

The elements of post-modernity exist in the center of this novel. Along with the postmodernist ethos, there are also certain glimpses of historical reality; Richard J Lane illustrates this point in his brief critical statement quoted below:

These preparatory references assist in considering *The Help* as a first novel—a species of fiction bearing both innocence and expected errors. More sophisticatedly, in the ken of a novel such as E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*, *The Help* may be understood as a postmodern historical novel as defined by Amy Elias in *Sublime Desire*. The *Help* deserves such serious contemplation and speculation as Stockett's postmodern, first novel. (27)

The hegemonic order and principle often followed by the white families are shattered. The subversive ethos is not presented blatantly. Rather it is presented in a subtle and meticulous way. The core message of the novel is that innocence should not remain detached from the strategic battle against the hegemony and horror of the real world of domination.

Smith Mailer is of the opinion that the Blacks in America prior to the advent of the civil rights movement were doomed to confront these charges which are groundless and baseless. They did not have audacity to raise voice. Yet certain underground practices were afoot to initiate the practice of liberation. Mailer's view is presented below:

The Help is set in the early 1960s in Jackson Mississippi, and told primarily from the first-person perspectives of three women: Aibileen, Minny, and Skeeter. Aibileen is an African-American maid who cleans houses and cares for the young children of various white families. The fear of being fired from jobs is the chronic headache from which every Black woman is haunted. Though no social campaign is afoot, they themselves sought to defend their professional dignity and freedom.

The Help aims at fostering message that it is the self that takes precedence over institutionalized forms of liberations. (41)

The power of an individual Black girl to confront any kind of hurdle for the sake of defending one's dignity is the most valuable theme of the novel *The Help*. Mailer subscribes to this sort of view, though it is not obviously manifest in the novel. Minny is Aibileen's confrontational friend who frequently tells her employers what she thinks of them, resulting in her having been fired from nineteen jobs. Yet she faces it nonchalantly.

Becker Bertens is supportive of the notion of feminist over-assertiveness in coping with the difficulties set by the society where institutionalized slavery lies. The solidarity and willingness to make a common cause with each other is the most vital part of this novel. Bertens puts forwards his view regarding the pervading effect of this novel, *The Help*:

Aibileen's point of view develops in this chapter. As are the subsequent chapters in Aibileen's voice, it is written in first person with a prevalent dialect. Aibileen's humor gets her through bad times, and it is clear that she must keep her real self inside in order to appear the subservient, obedient maid. She is also proud of her skills at raising children and is secretly pleased that they favor her over their own mamas. This foreshadows events where Baby Girl sees herself as belonging more to Aibileen than her own kind. (52)

Out of the three ladies in *The Help*, Aibileen is not as assertive and audacious as others are. Minny is brimful of unrestrained energy. She does not have the idea of how to teach a lesson to the white master. When she knows her own friend is going to publish an article about the discriminatory activities of Minny's white master, Minny

is profoundly happy. She had never guessed that the power of pen can quake callous and insensitive whites. Aibileen's viewpoint has to be the viewpoint of every person who has never realized that pen has the power to give a jolt to the rigid structure of society.

The backdrop of this novel is undoubtedly the civil rights movement. According to Rebecca Kelm, the civil rights movement did not occur instantaneously. It is the explosion which erupted due to pervasive injustice lurking in the micro spheres of daily lives. Rebecca's view is listed below:

This first novel adopts the complicated theme of blacks and whites living in a segregated South. A century after the Emancipation Proclamation, black maids raised white children and ran households but were paid poorly, often had to use separate toilets from the family, and watched the children they cared for commit bigotry. In Stockett's narrative, Miss Skeeter, a young white woman, is a naive, aspiring writer who wants to create a series of interviews with local black maids. (57)

Rebecca is of the opinion that several injustices and oppressions lied at the micro level daily interactions between the white family and the professional Blacks. Since there were no organized social campaigns to deal with such a trend, Individuals themselves had to explore suitable technique of saving one's own professional integrity and identity.

Draper Hall argues that the end of institutionalized slavery in the post-civil war America did not guarantee the complete end and eradication of the lingering traces of slavery. Though freedom is achieved by the Black from slavery, they are not

equipped with power and resources. Their destiny remained a matter of abstract imagination. Hall discloses his view in the following citation:

Four peerless actors render an array of sharply defined black and white characters in the nascent years of the civil rights movement. They each handle a variety of Southern accents with aplomb and draw out the daily humiliation and pain the maids are subject to, as well as their abiding affection for their white charges. The actors handle the narration and dialogue so well that no character is ever stereotyped.

(20)

As claimed by Hall, the haphazard acts like dismissing workers, caretakers and other menial employees used to bring negative effects in the families of the Black employees. That is why they were in difficult situations. They were in dilemma. They had to remain in the job on the one hand. And on the other they had to minimize the intimidating manners of their white employees. It is these qualities and characteristics which make the novel a superb intertwining of personal and political history.

Chris Palmerton evaluates the collective and organized campaign of three Black ladies to expose the discriminations committed by the outstanding white men via writing. He arrives at the conclusion that they are actually seeking cultural change. Cultural change is possible through these creative activities. Palmerton makes some additional remarks in this regard:

Skeeter's coming of age, the bitter seed of resentment growing in Aibileen and Minny and the heartless cruelty of one of Jackson's outstanding citizens allows Stockett to build a novel whose heartbeat is injustice, indignation and cultural change. Her pitch-perfect depiction of a country's gradual path toward integration will pull readers into a

compelling story that doubles as a portrait of a country struggling with racial issues. (33)

The perseverance of the Black ladies is proverbial. They are using writing as the means to deal with the unexpressed threat posed by the so-called great white men of Mississippi. Though activism was not suited to women of color at that time, opposition via writing is the most effective means to explore and assert freedom and individuality.

The danger of alienation and communication gap provokes any extent of danger. The rapid movement of Black ladies towards change in the culture of domestic working has its own side effect. It inflicts incurable injury in the psyche and family of those Black workers. Susan Minot puts her view about *The Help* and its questioning of aggressive societal phenomenon:

The insensitivity of the white lady is intimidating in an indirect way. It is doubtful to know if she intentionally acts the way her does in *The Help*. Because he is compelled to act and react in this way, it is useless to reflect on the private side of the characters' lives. The dominant tendency of the then society is to hanker after materialistic gains at the cost of the sacred values and norms. The prospect of humanity and humility is almost dim. (49)

The expansion of discriminatory micro level culture has inflicted onslaught on the redemptive culture of the nineteenth century Black women. Instead of thinking about the effects of unrestrained dismissal, people simply give free rein to their passions for power, gains and material comfort. The extreme attachment with racial haughtiness and arrogance gains has shadowed other vital part of human life.

Although all these critics examined this novel from multiple angles and arrived at various interpretations, none of them dwell upon the issue of female bonding. Thus the present researcher aims at probing the issue of female bonding. The core essence of female bonding is that there must be a harmonious bond and commonality between woman and woman in a woman's struggle for freedom from patriarchal domination, subjugation and any other forms of discriminatory practices. The researcher makes use of the theory of female bonding or woman centered feminism so that the thematic of female bonding can be clearly traced in the novel *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett.

Feminism is one of two subfields that arguably can be situated under the umbrella term female. For this reason, before examining feminism, it is good to take a brief account of this term. Female typically refers to the social process of dividing up people and social practices along the lines of sexed identities. The female process frequently involves creating hierarchies between the divisions it enacts. One or more categories of sexed identities are privileged or devalued. In modern western societies, female divides into two. This is not necessarily the case in other times, places and cultures. Female in the modern west usually refers to two distinct and separate categories of human beings as well as to the division of social practices into two fields. "The gendering of social practices", according to Barseley, "may be found, for example in contemporary western societies, in a strong association between men and public life and between women and domestic life, even though men and women occupy both spaces"(10).

The more female differences are narrowed down, the more optimistic scope feminism acquires. If none of the significant differences between man and woman exist, men will automatically come in defense of the rights and freedom of women.

Only in the space in which female differences cease to exist, even the unity and harmony amidst women come to flourish. Only by destroying the patriarchal structure of society, women won't accomplish complete level of freedom and access to different sorts of rights. Thus that aspect of feminism which talks about promoting female bonding and the harmony amidst women would be quoted and used in this research.

The drudgery of enslaved African-American women's work is unimaginable. The grinding poverty of free wage labor in the rural South tellingly illustrates the high costs Black women have paid for survival. The millions of impoverished African-American women are ghettoized in Philadelphia, Birmingham, Oakland, Detroit, and other U.S. inner cities. With this problem of ghettoization, Barbara Christian remarks:

Ghettoization of women demonstrates the continuation of these earlier forms of Black women's economic exploitation. Second, the political dimension of oppression has denied African-American women the rights and privileges routinely extended to White male citizens. Forbidding Black women to vote, excluding African-Americans and women from public office, and withholding equitable treatment in the criminal justice system all substantiate the political subordination of Black women. (54)

Barbara looks at other aspects also. According to her, Educational institutions have also fostered this pattern of disenfranchisement. Past practices such as denying literacy to slaves and relegating Black women to underfunded, segregated Southern schools worked to ensure that a quality education for Black women remained the exception rather than the rule.

The large numbers of young Black women in inner cities and impoverished rural areas continue to leave school before attaining full literacy. It represents the continued efficacy of the political dimension of Black women's oppression. According to Zetkin, "race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, and ethnicity among others constitute major forms of oppression in the United States" (87). However, the convergence of race, class, and gender oppression characteristic of U.S. slavery shaped all subsequent relationships that women of African descent had within Black American families and communities, with employers, and among one another.

This thesis has been divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, the researcher introduces the topic, elaborates the hypothesis, and quotes different critics' views regarding to the text. In the same chapter, the researcher shows the departure also. In the second chapter the researcher makes a thorough analysis of the text, *The Help*, by applying the tool of female bonding. The last chapter contains the conclusive ending of the research.

II. Female Bonding in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*

The Help, a novel by Kathryn Stockett, deals with various forms of discriminations which Black women had to face while working in the houses of white ladies. Prior to the advent of civil rights movement, many lower class Black women had to face several discriminations. Many Black women belonging to the lower strata of society are hired in the houses of white people. These Black women are hired to clean houses, wash clothes of the white, iron those clothes, cook food for the white people and look after white people's kids. Although slavery was already abolished and no institutionalized racist practices existed prior to the advent of civil rights movement, many small but humiliating acts of discriminations are committed.

The novel moves round the lives of three female characters, Aibileen, Minny and Skeeter. They are all Black women. They have had the experiences of working in white families. They have the bitter experiences of working in white man's houses. In white man's house, a Black woman is not allowed to use the same toilet which the white people or the guests of the white people use. A separate toilet is constructed for Black female worker so that no disease can spread. The Black women are still treated as the sources of disease. The white does hardly have problem in taking the service of Black women. But in sharing the same toilet with the Black, the white has had the

serious reservations. For answering back a white lady employer, a Black woman is fired at any time.

Aibileen, Minny and Skeeter face several kinds of discriminatory practices. They are humiliated so that they could never breach the discipline set by the white. Though the lives of Black female workers are difficult and insecure, they make a common cause with each other. They help one another. When a problem occurs in one Black female worker, other helps her. For instance, Minny is fired by her white lady Miss Walter on the false charge of stealing a precious object of her house. This charge is utterly baseless. Minny seeks job in the houses of other white ladies. But wherever Minny goes to seek job, it is Miss Walter who prevents Minny from getting a job.

Once, Minny is about to get a job in one white family, but Miss Walter informs the family that Minny is a terrible and incorrigible thief. In this way, Minny is in despair. At that time, Aibileen helps her getting a job. When Miss Walter is going to telephone to a white lady who is about to give Minny a job, it is Aibileen who disconnects the telephone line. However hostile and discriminatory the working conditions for the Black, they struggle to survive by helping one another. They never remain indifferent to the suffering of other women. The willing to get attached to a bond of women's solidarity and unity has become a good mechanism to survive in the world full of biases, and discrimination.

Miss Hilly and Miss Leefolt are friends. They are white ladies. They are on good terms. Once, Miss Hilly is invited by Leefolt along with other guests. They eat, drink and play card. They gossip about trivial things. Suddenly Miss Hilly expresses her dissatisfaction with the situation in Miss Leefolt's house. Hilly says that nothing is nastier than using the same toilet which is used by Black kitchen worker. It is Hilly who goads Leefolt to construct a separate toilet for Black worker. The following

snatch of conversation exemplifies how the white ladies talk about constructing separate toilet for their Black workers:

Hilly raises her chin up. Then she give one a 'ah-hems'. She got this way a clearing her throat real delicate-like that get everybody's attention without they even kowing she made them do it. But the guest bathroom's where the help goes. Miss Hilly says. Nobody says anything for a second. Then Miss Walter nod, like she explaining it all. She is upset case the Niger uses the inside bathroom and so do we. Law, not this messes again. (7)

Legally, it is forbidden to discriminate Black people. But these white ladies talk about how horrible to use the same toilet used by the Black servants. Hilly not only commits this sort of racist and discriminatory act but goads Leefolt to commit the similar kind of inhuman act of segregation. If truths about this kind of discrimination come out, these white ladies will have to face public trial. So they remain in their houses, gossip together and talk about committing discriminatory activities. They all look over at me straightening the silver drawer in the sideboard and I know it is time for me to leave.

To conduct this research, the researcher makes use of the theory of female bonding and sexuality. The theory of female bonding particularly focuses on the fact that female identity is a construct. In a patriarchal society, several practices, norms, trends and institutional cults exist to intensify the gender differences. To justify and buttress the patriarchal society and ideology, the notion of the victimization of women is intensifies. The rationale of gender difference would be proved and restated. So long as gender difference is fostered and disseminated to fulfill the benefit of one group, the other would always be in the disadvantage. The core essence of feminism is that gender is the socio-cultural construct. The dominant trends, customs, beliefs

and ideologies have given birth to the notion of gender differences. So long as gender differences are abolished, it would be difficult to put into practice some of the revolutionary agenda and programs of feminism.

Chris Beaseley is the leading female bonding. She hints at women's group identity. Union among women is key to reaching the ultimate destination of liberation. Her view is mentioned below in a precise way:

Gender Difference feminists give value to women's group identity as women, and try to avoid using men/masculine as the standard of comparison. They suggest that women should be considered in their own terms. Hence, the focus is not on a universal human nature but upon positively re-valuing group identities like women/ the feminine. Where the equality perspective associated with strongly modernist accounts like liberal and Marxist feminisms is inclined to argue that difference between men and women is either a myth produced to perpetuate women's oppression. (46)

Gender difference is not always the sources of domination. it does not always foster the climate for oppression and subjugation of women by men. Even if gender differences are abolished, women may not be totally free from the pitfalls and hazards set by patriarchy as the booby trap to those women who are on the way to securing the prospect of liberation and individual dignity. Unless and until women are guided by the common cause of sacrifice for the collectivization of their freedom, it would be really difficult to actualize the dream of liberation.

Several evidences can be forwarded to claim that many women have not supported other women who have been struggling for justice and equality. A single group of women must have active sense of empathy and participation in the struggles

of another group of women. If the sorrow of women does not touch the other, and if they do not unite their efforts, how can they secure the sound prospect of freedom? Group identity of women is cornerstone in guaranteeing the freedom and justice for women. This is the core essence of gender difference feminism. Gender Difference theorists accept and even celebrate difference which they argue should not be read as inferiority.

Skeeter is a journalist who works in Jackson league. She wants to bring reform in the relation between the white employer and black employee. She makes use of her pen smartly. She writes several articles on how black women are compelled to work heavily in houses and paid low. She seeks to discourage the trend to construct separate toilet by the white people in their house. Skeeter thinks that she has to use her knowledge and skill of writing to boost the confidence of her female friends who work hard in the houses of the white men. The following lines describe Skeeter's plan to boost confidence in her friends and thereby making them able to live life with dignity and self-esteem:

Well I took a deep breath; I would like to write this showing the point of view of the help. The colored women down here, I tried to picture Constantine's face, Aibileen's. They raise a white child and then twenty years later the child becomes the employer. It is that irony that we love them and they love us yet. I swallowed my face trembling. We do not even allow them to sue the toilet in the house. Again there was silence. (106)

Skeeter is keenly devoted to the idea of uplifting the quality of working conditions of the Black people. In addition, she has also invented ways whereby Black women exchange information about the difficulties that have come in their occupations.

Through her writing, Skeeter wants to promote the horizon of solidarity and unity amidst women of color. From the level of daily occupational activities, Skeeter wants to see the complete end and abolition of discriminatory tactics. And, I felt compelled to continue, everyone knows how we white people feel, the glorified Mammy figure who dedicates her whole life to a white family.

Woman to woman relation is essential in strengthening the possibility of progress in feminist movement. If women are driven by the common purpose and goal and if they are sensitive to the suffering of sisterhood, they can face any challenge that comes on the way. In this regard, it is more relevant to quote Chris Beaseley who always stands in favor for woman to woman relation. Beaseley makes the following remarks:

If men/ masculinity is not to be inevitably valued, and women/femininity is to be acknowledged, even celebrated, then woman to woman relationships can no longer be viewed as of marginal significance against women's relationship with men. In a social context in which women are commonly characterized as engaged in a war among themselves over men and incapable of sustained friendships with each other. (49)

Chris Beaseley points out clearly the core aspect of women –centered feminism. If feminism aims at reshuffling women's relation with men, the significance of woman to woman relation should not be ignored and marginalized. The collective sense of being the member of organized sisterhood is imperative in reformulating man-woman relation in a new way. Thus the important thing is that it is pretty difficult to launch revolutionary programs of feminist movement without strengthening woman to woman relation from certain viewpoint. Women-centered feminism is supposed to

make certain contribution to this direction. Women-centered feminists typically promote a counter- strategy in which woman to woman relationships are given credit and encouraged

Before their employers' plan to impose practice of segregation on them, Aibileen, Minny and Elizabeth come to meet Skeeter and inform her that they are segregating. Skeeter publishes articles about those alienating and dehumanizing practices of the white people. Skeeter condemns these practices in her articles and laments that the so-called superiority of the white is really shallow. This audacious professional act of Skeeter really paves the way for the promotion of sound and inspiring working conditions. The following lines throw light on this aspect of the women's cooperative bonding:

Minny? You mean..... Missus Walters' old maid, I say, feeling suddenly how incestuous this is turning. I would not just be peering into Elizabeth's life, but Hilly's too. Minny got her some stories. She responds blatantly. Aibileen, I say. Thank you. Oh, thank you. Yes mam, I certainly do. I just..... I have to ask you. What changed your mind? Aibileen does not even pause. Miss Hilly, she says. I go quiet, thinking of Hilly's bathroom plan and accusing the maid of stealing and her talk of diseases. The name comes out flat, bitter as a bad pecan. (122)

The house of Skeeter has become a rendezvous for all the Black women who work the menial works in the houses of white ladies. The bossy nature of white men, the discriminatory activities of white ladies, low payment, compulsion to work in extra hour, the fear of being sexually abused by white men are some of the setbacks faced by the Black workers. In case they fall prey these hurdles and setbacks, they come to

meet Skeeter and inform her. Skeeter also weaves pretty convincing stories out of their bitter experiences and publishes in Jackson daily. Skeeter' articles have got a large number of audiences. The more readers read such stories, the more pressures can be exerted on the racist white who still has hollow sense of superiority.

Miss Skeeter is a very genuine and kindhearted woman. Once a Black girl named Constantine used to work in her house. When Skeeter came to Jackson to work in the newspaper, she is informed by her parents that Constantine is missing. Since last a few days she is nowhere to be seen. Her parents tell Skeeter that efforts are under way to track Constantine down. But she is not found yet. Skeeter is shocked at the news about Constantine's disappearance.

Skeeter becomes worried. She doubts that Constantine might be kidnapped by some lecherous men. In addition, she thinks that if no effort is made to find out her, she might be sexually abused and exploited. Seeing the miserable fate of Constantine, Skeeter herself comes to her house by taking leave from her office. She asks her parents about Constantine. She decides to track her down by visiting several probable places where Constantine might have gone. Skeeter is willing to make cooperative interaction with any Black woman who is either trapped or helpless due to adverse situation. The following lines reveal how much Skeeter is concerned with the fate and future of Constantine:

When I got home, Mother stepped back to get a better look at me.

Well, your skin looks beautiful, she said, but your hair. She sighed,

shook her head. Where is Constantine? I asked. Is she in the Kitchen?

Now let's get all trunks unpacked before you ruin your clothes. I

turned and blinked at her. I did not think I had heard her correctly.

What did you say? Mother stood straighter, something down her dress.

Constantine has gone, street. (69)

At Constantine's sudden disappearance, Skeeter's mother is not as affected as she is. Constantine worked hard in running the family. Due to Constantine, Skeeter's parents got freedom to work and earn and then to rear Skeeter. At least they should have been anxious at the sudden disappearance of Constantine. But Skeeter has not seen any trace of worry and anxiety. So she herself takes bold decision to go to California where Constantine is supposed to live. To save Constantine from possible threat and harm, Skeeter takes bold initiative. From Skeeter's humanitarian approach and initiative, it is undoubtedly clear that the space and scope of gender bonding is likely to be enlarged. And like she was delivering the weather, Mother said, Constantine is no longer employed here.

Andolsen Barbara argues that feminism has achieved some of its proclaimed agenda and goals. New goals and visions have evolved in the direction of feminist thinking. The new horizon of socio-cultural life has rendered obsolete the old programs of reforms and equality. Barbara briefly points out her viewpoint in the following extract:

Women centered Feminism is the popular designation for the largely liberal but sometimes postmodern –infected feminist movement in the west during the 1990s. This movement frequently promotes the idea that western societies have reached an era of post-feminism, suggesting that the goals of second-wave feminism have been achieved and or that this older form of feminism is now outmoded because it is overly focused on women's victimized status. (256)

Barbara does not encourage the trend to study the problem of a single woman as an individual being having distinct sensitivity and understanding of her own. According to Barbara, “problems of women should be viewed in broader category. It is imperative to check the group status and position of women in society to find out factors that contribute to the happening of this sort of problem.

If women are viewed as social grouping and if their problems are studied in terms of the loopholes of this social grouping, certain uplifting measures can be taken to achieve the intended goals of women centered feminism. Otherwise it would remain a tough and impractical job. In this way, third wave feminism often positions itself in antagonism to more established feminist projects and displays doubts about the concept of women as a broad social grouping, arguing that this category is unhelpful.

In the course of travelling to track Constantine down, Skeeter comes to know that Constantine disappears with the dual purpose of leaving Skeeter free and earning her daily bread herself. Skeeter herself says “I finally stopped asking people why Constantine had left. It was like she had simply disappeared. I had to accept that Constantine, my one ally, had left me to fend for myself with these people”(69). Wherever Skeeter goes to find out Constantine, she is told that Constantine left her house because she wants to live an independent life. By saying this, they had actually tried to stop Skeeter’s move. The real fact is that Constantine is forcibly taken to work in a white man’s house. In that house there is the danger that she can be abused sexually and psychologically.

Skeeter is that sort of Black lady who holds the view that solidarity, unity and mutual sense of cooperation are essential in fighting with unnecessary setbacks and hurdles set by the so-called figureheads of society. Skeeter has had noble thought of

female bonding. At first women of color who work menial household drudgeries should be actively helpful and cooperative. Otherwise it would be troublesome for them to achieve remarkable level of progress. In addition, Skeeter subscribes to the conviction that noble thought should be put into practices. Else, thought remains in its abstract level and does not affect life positively and creatively. The following lines written by the chief editor of Jackson League project how popular sentiments are really for Skeeter:

I am responding personally to your resume because I found it admirable that I young lady with absolutely no work experience would apply for an editing job at a publisher as prestigious as ours. You would know this if you had done any amount of research on the business. But your fresh and unique skill of writing and covering subjects matter has enabled us to choose you on this post. You are free to use your pen on any topic that disturbs you. (71)

The vigorous sense of uniting sisterhood in suffering has influenced many persons both senior and junior. Out of genuine sense of support, and sympathy, Skeeter proceeds ahead in her task. More than sympathy and lower level of thought, Skeeter goes ahead in her campaign with the higher level of thoughts like empathy and compassion. Any bad thing that happens to any woman really touches her. Once she feels empathetically the sufferings, she takes initiative. A minimum of five years in the business is mandatory for such a job.

Miriam Rose is peculiar feminist theorist who holds view similar to that of Barbara. She strongly takes social grouping of women as a means to maintain the integrity of individual differences and social recognition. Rose insists them not to ignore their distinct gender traits. She makes a call to respect those qualities which

make woman a distinct individual. Social grouping and harmony amidst women belonging to any community and culture is instrumental in actualizing some of the long cherished visions of freedom and prosperity. The following lines capture Miriam Rose's distinct view in this regard:

This means that feminism is a critical stance that decenters the assumptions of the mainstream in terms of center (men)-periphery (woman). This is a feature of sexuality and Masculinity Studies, which similarly decenters the notions of the norm in relation to sex and power. Feminism not only decenters the usual assumptions about what is central and what is at the margins, but also shifts the subject of the analysis, in that the notion of woman is placed in center stage. (16)

The issue related with women is placed at the center of feminist discourse. Even the subject of analysis undergoes change. Nothing related with women is left as irrelevant and negligible. Everything appears to be equally important so far as the object of analysis is concerned. If discursive as well as non-referential matters are examined in relation with the politics of the matter, it would remain the same practice which promises many things but yield none of the significant conclusion. Thus, critical attention should be directed by the feminists of gender bonding to the specific object of analysis. This occurs even when feminists questions the validity of this sexed identity. Feminists focus, in short, on that which is deemed marginal/Peripheral.

Once, Minny goes to work in the house of a white woman named Celia. Celia hires Minny to work in the kitchen. Minny is amazed at the liberal and compassionate attitude of her employer, Celia. Celia is ready to give plenty of freedom to Minny. Minny is impressed by the liberal and tranquil approach of Celia. For a few weeks Minny works. Once, Minny asks Celia where her husband is. Celia says that he goes

to office early in the morning and comes only in the late evening. Minny is convinced with Celia's responses about her husband. But slowly and gradually Minny comes to know a painful reality.

The reality is that Celia's husband cannot endure to see a Black woman working in his house. He can go to the extent of shooting the Black employer dead if he happens to see her. Due to this fear, no Black lady works in Celia's house. Without informing her husband, Celia has hired Minny. That is why Celia is sort and generous towards Minny. Minnie is fearful now. At first Minny is convinced that Celia's husband goes to his office early in the morning and comes home in the late evening. In case he comes in the middle of day, he will surely shoot Minny. For putting her life in such a hazard, Minny begins to hate her. Since then, Minny decides to hate Celia. She quits her job. Elizabeth is a girl who secretly informs Minny that it is terrible to stay in Celia's house and work. The following lines describe this sort of hazardous situation of Minny:

I feel sick by the thick smell of gardenia soaps by the sink. I hear footsteps. I hold breath. The footsteps stop. Acts like I am burglar? Oh, I hate her! I hate that stupid woman! I listen, but all I can hear is my own panting. The thud-thud in my chest overpowers me. My ankles hurt and creak, holding up my body like this. My eyes grow sharper in the dark. After a minute, I see myself in the mirror over the sink. Crouched like a fool on top of a white lady's toilet. (53)

In the very beginning Minny thinks that she has got a nice and kind-hearted white employer. She could not help getting appreciative of Celia's pleasing personality. But when her friend, Elizabeth, tells her fact about the murderous temperament of Celia's husband and his phobic hatred of the Black, Minny awakes to her insecure condition.

As soon as Minny happens to know the truth about how insecure she is in Celia's work, deep hared wells up in her heart. Therefore decides to quit this job. Had her friend, Elizabeth, not warned Minny, Minny might be killed at any time by Celia's murderous and monstrous husband? My heart is thumping like a cat in clothes dryer. What if Miss Celia pretends she does not know me so she won't get in trouble?

Laura Ouzgame has expounded some of the basic tenets of gender difference framework in feminism. Like other feminist, she is critical of the reform oriented ethos that has gained currency in the recent feminist discussion and discourse. Laura's view adds further clarity to the method of the analysis of the text. Her view is mentioned below:

The aim of the gender Difference framework in Feminism was, rather than attempting to locate the marginalized at the edges of existing society, to acknowledge difference positively. Indeed Difference theorizing involves privileging the marginalized, at least strategically. In Feminism this has meant revaluing the Feminine. Such thinking tends towards an at least bifurcated account of different social and cultural positioning. (21)

Gender difference feminism comes to operate strategically in the field which is entirely dominated by the patriarchal discourse. Since some of the main goal of earlier waves of feminism is already achieved, feminism has renewed option to act and operate strategically. Without operating strategically, it is really difficult to maintain solid ground in the voices of women can be projected. Just by looking critically at the social and cultural positioning of women, none of significant breakthrough will arise. Strategic approach is key to creating solidarity amidst women.

By raising directly the political voices alone, it would be tough to expect genuine sense of achievement. Efforts should be made to unite the fragmented voice, unacknowledged experience and unidentified expectation so that the discourse of representation works as a strategy. Thus the target of gender difference feminism is to revalue the feminine not for the sake of revaluation but for intended strategic purpose. In the modernist identity politics versions of gender difference, this amounts to asserting differently constructed gender politics versions of gender identities and experiences and mounting political platforms based upon the specific positioning of women.

Minnie's mother narrates a bitter experience about how tolerant and submissive a Black employee should be in the house of white lady. Minny's mother once answers back her white lady in a suggestive way. Since then, she is fired from her job. Any assertive and confidential talk of Black employee results in the untimely and unexpected dismissal of job. Minny's mother counsels Minny in the following excerpt:

First day at my White Lady's house, I ate my ham sandwich in the kitchen; put my plate up in my spot in the cupboard. But when the white lady said: Now, I want you to be sure and hand-wash all the clothes first then put them in the electric machine to finish up. I said: Why I got to handwash when the power washer gone do the job? That is the biggest waste of time I ever heard of. The white lady smiled at me, and five minutes later, I was out on the street. (40)

Minnie's mother is advising her not to answer back white lady if she is right or wrong. She advises her daughter to be soft, cool and yes woman. Whatever the white lady says, it should be accepted without giving any response. The working conditions for

the Black women in white people's houses are really critical. With extreme fear and submission, they have to work. In such a condition, it is imperative for senior and experienced Black women to teach the young fresh Black women how to maintain the decorum while working in white people's families. When that little brat stole her pocketbook and hid it in the oven, Aibileen did not whoop her on the behind.

The mutual support for each other is of utmost importance if Black women are to survive peacefully in their occupations. Minny's mother sets down more than half a dozen of rules for those Black women who are willing to work in White people's house. The following rules represent how exhaustive the working conditions are:

Sit down on your behind, Minny, because I am about to tell you the rules for working in a white Lady's house. Rule number one for working for a white lady, Minny. It is nobody's business. You keep your nose out of your white lady's problems, you do not go crying to her with your-you cannot pay the light bill? Your feet are too sore? Remember one thing: you keep out of it, you hear me? Rule number Two: do not ever let that white lady find you sitting on her toilet. I do not care if you have got to go so bad it is coming out of your haribraid.

(38)

Minny's mother belongs to the old generation. She endured plenty of biases and prejudices. She is subjected to the severe cases of humiliation, horror, fear of dismissal, and vice of self-immolation. Shem, therefore, does not have the idea of resisting against the white people's supremacy in each and every thing. The more tolerant Black people are the more pressures the white people impose on them. But the generation of Minny is far better, smart and intelligent. The Black women of the new generation have developed several strategies to deal with coercive pressures of

the white people. White people are not your friends. They do not want to hear about it. And when Miss White Lady catches her man with the lady next door.

Some women conscious of feminist movement embody both the rebellious and conformist conviction. The closer scrutiny of their activities and thinking yields a new level of understanding. Gender does not just appear as the socially constructed category which has to be dismantled. Of course gender is the category which is the outcome of social happening and individual's interaction with social practices and institutions. But the lingering effect of an individual's immersion in gender category is really shocking. It is baffling. The notion of gender as the constructed category needs manipulation so that it would could facilitate women to obtain sense of solidarity. With this aspect of feminist thinking, Clara Cohen makes additional remarks:

Ironically, it would seem that gender is disputed both on the grounds that it is associated with the diminution of a focus on particular sexed identities and with the shoring up of such identities. Still others view gender's concern with sexed identities as precisely the means to undo these identities. What this debate signals is an ongoing discussion central to the entire field of gender /sexuality theory regarding the question of whether focus on particular identity groups is politically helpful or harmful. (13)

Certain degree of ambivalence exists in the reformist agenda of gender difference feminism or women centered feminism. Both the political and apolitical advantages should not be sought for while executing some of the topmost agenda and prescribed goals of feminism. To make feminist vision far more viable, Clara Cohen has sought to bring the true reformist ethos from the plethora of confusion.

Aibileen is another important character who directly falls victims to her white employer Miss Leefolt's discriminatory act of constructing toilet. To hide her discriminatory sense of haughtiness and arrogance, Leefolt behaves soberly and gently. In a patronizing way, Leefolt suggests Aibileen to use separate toilet that is recently constructed. In a very surprising way, Leefolt admonishes Aibileen to use the separate toilet that is recently constructed for her. The following lines dramatize Leefolt's condescending attitude which comes in the very patronizing way:

Mister Leefolt and I have decided to build you your very own bathroom. She claps her hands together, drop her chin at me. It is right out there in the garage. Yes ma'am. Where she thinks I been all this time? So, from now on, instead of using the guest bathroom, you can use your own right out there. Won't that be nice? So, from now on, instead of using the guest bathroom, you can use your own right out there. Won't that be nice? (29)

Miss Leefolt knows that it is not humane of her to build a separate toilet for her Black employee. It is not compatible to take Black employee's service and treat her as the most horrible and inferior creature. It is illegal to make a racist tilt in one's approach to the handling of Black employees. So Miss Leefolt assumes an air of affection. She tends to patronize Minny. However compassionate her nature might be, Minny takes such a patronizing attitude as the most horrible expression of racist arrogance. She smiles big now. She do not have to teeth showing, just a lip smile, kind you got to watch.

On their leisure days, Minny, Eugenia, Elizabeth, Aibileen and Skeeter meet together to share about their weeklong experiences of working in the houses of white people. They gossip together, dine with own accord and share about difficulties in

their occupations. In these regular assemblages, they feel healed and boosted by the mutual willingness to cooperate one another. The following lines exemplify one instance of female bonding:

We all chatting and smiling at each other like we own in-not cause we mind if they are white people on here, we sit anywhere we want to now thanks to Miss Parks-just cause it is a friendly feeling. I spot Minny in the back center seat. Minny short and bit got shiny black curls. She setting with her legs splayed, her thick arms crossed. She seems to be seventeen years younger than I am. (13)

The frequent meeting, regular conversations on leisure day and sharing of work experiences make these women more confident. They feel much more sure and certain in facing any deviation that come in their professional life. No arrogance and envy have weakened the tie of sisterhood that is firmly cemented amidst them. Though such gathering seems to be trivial, it has made crucial contribution to women's struggles for existence in racism-oriented world. Minny could probably lift this bus up over her head if she wanted to. Old lady like me is lucky to have her as a friend.

Margaret Flannery holds different kind of view regarding to the economic profile and position of women in Patriarchal society. If Zetkin holds patriarchy as the mechanism to foster exploitation of women by men, Flannery holds different kind of view. She says that ideology is not important in the Feminist analysis. She argues that social class of women is far more important than the concept of ideology. Her view runs as follows:

For Feminists, the concept of social class is considered to be more important than the concept of patriarchy since the latter is seen as a

form of ideology that stems from class exploitation. Women are not a sex class because the only thing they have in common is their sex - an upper class woman, for example, has little if nothing in common with a working class woman. In addition, there is general agreement amongst feminists. (72)

The concept of women as the sex class should be abolished in order to boost their economic strength and status. The idea of being an attractive woman capable of tempting man of substance should be kept at bay if and only if women are to be empowered economically. Without economic empowerment, it is pretty challenging to upgrade the working condition.

Skeeter is in a deep romantic bond with Stuart Whitworth, son of a senator. The romantic bond between Skeeter and Stuart flourishes incredibly. But when Stuart's father knows about his son's affair with a Black girl, he decides to either put an end to the life of Skeeter or send Stuart away from his beloved to an unknown territory. If the white senator sends his son to the place of his preference, it would not be harmful. But if he poses terrible threat to Skeeter, it would be a great disaster not only to Skeeter but to those friends of Skeeter who are directly assisted by her. Aibileen has heard about the senator's plan to break the relation between Skeeter and Stuart.

Aibileen forewarns Skeeter about the possible harm that the senator can do. Skeeter collects facts about the senator's plan and publishes in her articles. When his hideous plan comes out in article and reaches the public, he is mortally humiliated. Skeeter claims that if any harmful things happen to her, the senator would be responsible for it. In this way, they are Black women create bonding and defensive

mechanism so that they can deal with any probable consequences. The following lines illustrate this aspect of bonding amidst women:

Hello, I say from my side of the room, Good to see you again. I sit on the far end of the sofa. Aibileen sits on the other end of the sofa, between us. I clear my throat, produce a nervous smile. Minny does not smile back. She is fat and short and strong. Her skin is blacker than Aibileen's by ten shades and shiny and taut, like a pair of new patent shoes. I already told Minny how we doing the stories, Aibileen say to me. You helping me write mine. What about hers she gone tell you, while you write it down? (164)

The language of conversation amidst these Black women is full of dialect, and ethnic varieties. Their conversation reflects the class background. The sufferings of these women seem to be unimportant. But the wages they earn by working in the houses of the white families are vital in running their families and sending their children to school. That is why seeking help, security and confidence is of utmost importance. The matters they discuss are often presented in code language throughout the period of discussion. That is why the author incorporates the odd dictions and dialects. Miss Skeeter, Minny nods. She settles in a wooden chair Aibileen has brought out from the kitchen, and the frame creak.

Skeeter becomes the local messiah who liberates sufferings sisters from the traps of lingering racism and discriminations. The more Skeeter becomes mature in her struggle for freedom and racial equality through her writings, the more broad subject matters she explores. The following lines show how mature shift came in the writing career of Skeeter:

I read through four of the twenty-five pages, mesmerized by how many laws exist to separate us. Negroes and whites are not allowed to share water fountains, movie houses, public restrooms, ballparks, phone booths, circus shows. I think about Constantine, the time my family took her to Memphis with us and the highway had mostly washed out, but we had to drive straight on through because we knew the hotels would not let her in. I think about how no one in the car would come out and say it. We all know about these laws. (173)

Legally, racist practices and discriminations are taken as criminal activities. From rest room, to movie hall and from medicine store to the educational institutions, Black women are treated as though are abominable swine. Skeeter's articles, initially, deal with household discrimination. Now her articles deal with serious and shocking cases of racist interventions. Negroes cannot use the same pharmacy or buy postage stamps at the same window.

Carrol Gilligan is another prominent woman centered Feminist. She makes a plea to women to avoid playing double role. Commitment to only one cause and principle is likely to ensure the better prospect in the lives of women. Gilligan is quite explicit in mentioning her view that enabling women to the jobs with good economic prospect are the key to economic salvation. Women should struggle themselves to work out their salvation in every sphere of life. Gilligan makes the following view in this regard:

Women's work and their social status are highly marginalized by their potential / actual dual role in modern societies (child-rearer and worker). Employers are able to exploit this dual role to pay women lower wages. Men are able to exploit this dual role by receiving unpaid

services within the home. The main reason for women's lower status in relation to men is the fact that they are generally economically dependent upon their male partner. Male power over women is consolidated by ideological myths about women. (129)

The willingness of women to play dual role has made them the recipient of lower wages. They are paid low amount in comparison to their male counterparts. In addition, men are tempted to get the unpaid service from women. To get continuously the unpaid service of women, men have created several myths and tales about women. These images and myths about an affectionate mother serving altruistically to her husband and children are ploys to exercise power influence over women. These myths are part of a powerful socializing influence upon women that leads them to define their major role as that of mother, housekeeper and child-rearer.

Black social and political thought has been limited by both the reformist postures toward change. Adhering to a male-defined ethos that far too often equates racial progress with the acquisition of an ill-defined manhood has left much U.S. Black thought with a prominent masculinist bias. In this case the patterns of suppressing Black women's ideas have been similar yet different. Much contemporary U.S. Black feminist thought reflects Black women's increasing willingness to oppose gender inequality within Black civil society. Dorothy Smith points out how Black women in American have produced social thought to cope with oppression and then to oppose it. Dorothy Smith's view can be seen in the citation:

U.S. Black women have produced social thought designed to oppose oppression. Not only does the form assumed by this thought diverge from standard academic theory. It can take the form of poetry, music, essays, and the like but the purpose of Black women's collective

thought is distinctly different. Social theories emerging from and/or on behalf of U.S. Black women and other historically oppressed groups aim to find ways to escape from. (217)

According to Dorothy Smith, feminism advocates women's emancipation and empowerment. She is critical of some of the tenets of western feminism. Mainstream Marxism is exclusionary in nature. Marxist social thought aims for a more equitable society, while queer theory opposes heterosexism. Beyond U.S. borders, many women from oppressed groups also struggle to understand new forms of injustice. In a transnational, postcolonial context, women within new and often Black-run nation-states in the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia struggle with new meanings attached to ethnicity, citizenship status, and religion. In increasingly multicultural European nation-states, women migrants from former colonies encounter new forms of subjugation. In the United States, for example, African-American social and political thought analyzes institutionalized racism, not to help it work more efficiently, but to resist it.

Social theories expressed by women emerging from these diverse groups typically do not arise from the rarefied atmosphere of their imaginations. Instead, social theories reflect women's efforts to come to terms with lived experiences within intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and religion. Black feminist thought reflects similar power relationships. "For African-American women", Nancy Naples says, "critical social theory encompasses bodies of knowledge and sets of institutional practices that actively grapple with the central questions facing U.S. Black women as a collectivity"(87). The need for such thought arises because African-American women as a group remain oppressed within a U.S.

context characterized by injustice. This neither means that all African-American women within that group are oppressed in the same way.

III. Campaign for Social Harmony

The core finding of this research is that solidarity and unity amongst women are instrumental in ending various forms of subjugation and domination. In the novel *The Help*, the three main female characters Aibileen, Minny and Skeeter help one another actively and resultantly succeed in coping with some of the dreadful discriminatory practices. All these women who work as house attendants in white family. They are employed by the white family to scrub floor, wash clothes, clean surrounding and prepare food for the white men. The white family members still treat their Black household employees in a discriminatory way.

The white family members like Leefolt, Hilly and Walter often talk about constructing separate toilets for their Black employees. When Minny hears about the plan of her white employer to construct a separate plan, she informs her friend Skeeter. Skeeter is a reporter who works for the Jackson league newspaper. Skeeter writes several articles about how the white families still discriminate their Black employees.

Skeeter publishes several articles on white employee's plan to construct separate toilets for their Black employees. Minny gives this information to Skeeter. Skeeter publishes articles on Jackson League and thereby puts pressures on the white people. Through cooperation between Minny and Skeeter, the burgeoning discriminatory practices at the domestic level are discouraged and dismissed.

Once, Minny is dismissed by her employer Miss Walter. Miss Walter is not only dismissed but also prevented from getting a job in other families. Miss Walter spreaded the bad news about Minny. When Minny is about to be employed by a

white woman, it is Miss Walter who told the white employer not to employ Minny because she steals jewels and other precious object. In this way Minny is prevented from getting any job in white family. At that time, Aibileen helps Minny.

By the time, Miss Celia is going to select Minny, Aibileen disconnects Miss Walter's telephone line so that no bad information about Minny could reach Celia, the employer of Minny. In the micro level of daily life, many Black women had to face several discriminatory practices. Black workers in the kitchens of white families had to eat on different plate with different spoon. Many white women put down several rules and regulatins for their Black employees.

The Black female employees in white family were not allowed to answer their white mistress back. When any white guest comes, the Black employee had to go out, with the kid she is supposed to handle. From eight to five o'clock, Black employees are assigned domestic chores. But payment is low. The payment Black employees get is not compatible with the bulk of household drudgeries they are required to solve. It is Skeeter who writes plenty of articles regarding to the treatment of Black women by their respective white employer. Skeeter openly denounced, in her articles, the callous and insensitive attitude of white ladies towards their Black employees.

The white ladies are frightened by Skeeter because Skeeter exposes realities and facts about their domestic lives. Skeeter is also informed about fresh and new events that happen in the inner domestic lives of the white. The mutual cooperation and coordination amidst Black women help them to minimize their sufferings, maximize their happiness. And finally it enables them to explore further avenue of opportunities and securities. Once, a white lady named Celia employs Minny. Celia is amazed at the liberal disposition of that white lady. But the reality is incredibly hazardous. Celia's husband has limitless hatred towards a Black woman.

If Celai's husband finds any Black woman working as a domestic worker in his house, he will shoot Black employee at once. Celia's dreadful husband goes out early in the morning and comes in the evening. Therefore, Celia decides to hire Minny as an employee. In case her husband comes in the house on a certain day, Minny will be killed at once. It is almost sure. Knowing this kind of probable danger that can happen at any time, Celia employs Minny. It is a sheer act of inhumanity and naked selfishness. Skeeter condemns this activity of Celia and saves Minny's life. By making common cause with one another, Black women proceed ahead confidently and assertively in the professional world.

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