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Racial Trauma and Self-Healing in Jefferson's *Negroland A Memoir*

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Racial Trauma and Helf- Healing in Jefferson’s *Negroland A Memoir*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Purnima Rai has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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## Abstract

*This dissertation explores Margo Jefferson's politics of memory about the encountering experience of bias that resulting trauma to author. The double rejection leads Jefferson to suicidal moves and difficulties to her clan, the neo-aristocrat African- American. Jefferson's Negroland A Memoir unfolds the mainstream American society's discrimination to the Non-white elite African- American more on the ground of the skin color than economy and position. This memoir is righteous confession of Jefferson's hindrance between dilemmas of sophisticated aristocrat which is taken as deleterious in eyes of Negroes who lacks the sufficiency and always biased by American whites in term of color, race and an origin. Author has adopted in this memoir to heal her racial wound through or used theoretical frameworks are, Politics of Memory of humiliation, rejection, and racial discrimination which have endorsed psychic trauma to her. It is her cleverness to imprint those traumas into words or proposed by Suzzate A. Henke "Scriptotherapy" with Lacapra's "Working Through" to eradicate sad memories and continuously self-healing for re-organizing, re-enacting, re-living and co-opting into the society with normal life.*

(Key Words: Politics of Memory, Racial Trauma, Scriptotherapy and Working Through)

## The Politics of Memory and Racial Trauma in Jefferson's *Negroland A Memoir*

This research work explores the traumatic memory pertaining to Margo Jefferson's personal experience in the elite black family in Chicago during the 1950s and the 1960s.

Jefferson's narrative undergoes traumatic experience of racism and double rejection.

Reviving the history in her award winning memoir, *Negroland A Memoir*, the theatre critic of *New York Times* rememorize the tragic past where segregation depend upon racial prejudice was heavily existed in the society where she lived and grown up.

"Negroland" is the symbolic name given by Jefferson to refer the residual area where limited (300-400) African- Americans use to live. Her politics of memory is concerned with the personal memoir represents the collective experiences of African-American victimized by racial discrimination and political purposes behind representation of Black in the history and culturally formed identity. Access of memory of past and situate in the present to get a meaning and recalling of past to reinterpret the struggle for the justice and against violence of distinction.

This self-representation concerns with embedding memory of racial trauma author has experienced as being a African and trauma of exclusion of elitist Blacks who are doubly victimized by the white American elite in terms of race and color, other side they are accused by same clan of Blacks who lives under the lower strata as elitist Blacks are forgotten the aesthetic living way of Black and imitating the white's way of living as well as norms and value. Her experience is embodied with a true history of enslavement of the Black and racial differences.

This memoir reveal how elite African-Americans are excluded from the both society and they lingers into the mid of nowhere and how their experience of exclusion is different from other general black people as they are victim of racism and doubly excluded as well. The trauma of racial exclusion experienced by elite African- American and other Negroes

people is same but what makes different is that other Negro people suffered from the single biased racism by white privileged society but the elites are biased and rejected by the white society in terms of color and another from the same race in terms of being evil and stain in the name of black race as they have accepted the every ways of being “white”.

*Negroland A Memoir* narrates painful history and memories of struggle of African people in America who are treated inhumanly, harassed and discriminated. They are tagged with “inferior”, “servant”, and “low gene” since historical period. Yet some Negroes are able to rise from the ashes of nothing. Jefferson, one of them who belong to the aristocratic African-American family, whose father Dr. Ronald Jefferson work as a paediatrician in the nation’s oldest black hospital and her mother Irma James Armstrong, a social worker and fashionista woman who taught author about style, fashion and living way of aristocrat and she have a sister named Denise Adele Jefferson. She lives in an elite way even though the Chicago has a classified people and status.

The memoir explores the author’s memory as a process of meaning making with remembering the troubling past and bringing in front of the world to make justice for the weaker/oppressed with naming the culprit behind of it. Memory authentic source about writing past and history as well, where the personal memory turns into collective one that represents the past and experience of African-American in the society of twentieth century’s America. The Blacks efforts to create distinct identity and searching for meaning of existence are the prime in racial bound or white dominant society.

Experience as foundation of memory and remembering the subject creates the meaning of the past or memories are records of how and what we have experienced the events in the past vice versa. In this memoir, author tries to remember about her troubling past of the mistreated by whites and her concerns over ethicality and morality which was forgotten in the American society she written back in favour of black people and specially

focusing on the personal issue of stocking on the verge of elitist and nobody as defined at that time. Her memoir travel backward to the history of African people and the native land of them- Africa and their trade in the America how they were forced to be what they don't want, with the power, civilization and advancement.

In *Negroland A Memoir*, author tries to find out inherent moral or ethical value to memory because personal life narrative narrates the contemporary story and structure of the society of that time or period. It performs to highlight upon the oppression and rejection of the Black by the white majority and it is her duty to illuminate the reality as intellectual scholar do. Revisiting into the history through memory performs obligation of memory to flashing the light upon the discrimination and domination due to racism is intended to searching for orthodox identity of black people and acknowledging the culprit and bringing real truth in front of the world/audience.

Author's unease with her American memoir which gives her goose bump whenever she wants to remember and while narrating it. Racial wound given by the society is incurable which repetitively pushed her into trauma with distorted psychology. Even though she is theater critic who won Pulitzer Prize in 1995 for a book review while she was engaged and signed in *The New York Times* yet unable to comment upon history and torture she had gone through in her upbringing. Presenting it in its true form in front of audience to make a global justice and judgement is prime motif of her memoir.

Memory, authentic medium of expression of experience of past through language and reinterpretation in the present there is certain socio-cultural structure that determines what to remember and what is not and why. Jefferson who belongs to the Black bourgeoisies of sixties era of America who remembers how her life spent in the racial biased society. Her memoir provides sufficient ironical situation created by power politics and ideology of supreme whites. Her politics of memory concerns with the personal memory and experience

resonant collective memory and experience whereby it also determine the way history is written and passed on which is also connected with identity as Marglit Avishai propose “there is responsibility to remember the past to explore the ethical significance of memory and forgetting” (79), he further mentions:

Memory then blends into morality through its internal relation with caring. And caring, and especially the lack of caring seems to belong quite naturally to morality. Indeed, some will hasten to add that caring should be regarded as the core attitude of morality. Against the claim that caring belongs to morality and even constitutes its core, I would like to present a counter claim, according to which we need morality precisely because we do not care. That is, we usually lack an attentive concern for the well-being of most members of the human race, we usually care about our parents, children, spouses, lovers, friends and by extension about some significant groups we belong. (32)

Self- narrative memoir presents the specific experience of being on elitist strata and her effort to rememorize troubling past to decode the tension between three different groups and primarily author’s distorted psyche due to racial partition which is the result of lack of the morality and ethics of humanity which has forgotten in the American society.

Negros were excluded by whites, they suffers from single domination but Jefferson presents how painful being rejected and boycott by own people. She hinders between the dilemma to be sophisticated aristocrat group which is taken as deleterious in the eyes of Negroes who lack the sufficiency and always biased by American whites in terms of color and race. She remembers “Children there were taught that most other Negroes ought to be emulating us when too many of them (out of envy or ignorance) went on behaving in ways that encouraged racial prejudice” (1), “Negro reviewers took pains to show their insider knowledge: one recorded the “disapprobation” of certain members of the higher classes;



another commended the author's "moral courage" given the subject's' delicacy" (10) how other Negroes have dejected the elite African- American out of envy or ignorance.

Ethics and morality is swiped due to ideology of supreme and higher degree among the humans who inherits the power, dominant ideas and most of the cultural and social amenities. As Dwight Garner makes review about this memoir:

Margo Jefferson's memoir, *Negroland* runs on several rails at once. In part it's a history of the upper strata of black society in America. Ms. Jefferson attends to its manners and mores and central figures and traces its shifting names, which include "the colored elite", "the colored 400" and "the blue vein society". Yet power dwells in the restraint of "Negroland". Ms. Jefferson gets a lot said about her life, the insults she has weathered, her insecurities even her suicidal impulses. There's sinew and grace in the way she plays with memory, dodging here and burning there, like a photographer in a darkroom. (21)

It speaks the powerful and complicated central theme of the memoir: suffocation and struggle for identity and specialization. Author as a representative of the excluded member of black bourgeoisie and the racial victim that injected trauma in her child psychology. White privileged society has excluded her and trapped inside web of the social unequal distribution of status, identity and inheritance.

Jefferson witnesses and agency to narrate/reveal the truth through memoir about the past, social, political and ideological infrastructure as Houman Barekat comments upon *Negroland* as:

"Negroland" is Jefferson's coinage to denote the milieu of affluent black Chicagoans in the 1950s and 60s. These successful strivers and members of the liberal professions write as socioeconomic anomaly. A personal memoir with profound political resonance, "Negroland" is as illuminating exploration of the racial politics of culture

and class. Culture in the default sense of what is normative and what is good, is by and large implicitly bound up in power, it is constituted by, and in turn perpetuates, the plethora of mores, assumptions and prejudices that help sustain the status quo. It is thus both a panacea- and a suffocating constraint. (20)

Race and racial violation of the twentieth century of America is the central issue of the memoir which become habitual during enslavement of sixteenth century. Power crates ideology and injected in the person's psychology that of higher/lower rank, master/slave and haves/haves not. Author impute in the *Negroland* primarily, compact of searching for distinct identity against the racial inequality and disjunction, herself as a witness of history and contemporary societal periphery of the fifties and sixties, the fragile despondency of black people by the domination of whites.

It is ethical responsibility of intellectual to portray the reality as Jefferson had done significantly flourish the light upon the new reality about the "colored aristocrat" (black bourgeoisie) who are highly educated, intellectual and economically established and have holdfast position of higher than previous ancestor still need to confront the reality of social disjuncture and differentiation of racial discrimination. The cause behind this was the inertia of hierarchy of whites over blacks and their constrain ideology of being superior to blacks does deny and rejects the existence of elite blacks.

Author lingers between unacceptable which severely leads her towards suicide several times. The burning social issue of that time severely heat author with racial wound or racial trauma that strike her continuously. Cathy Caruth writes, "The term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind. A wound inflicted by as emotional shock so powerful that it breaches the mind's experience of time, self and the world" (6). The memoir reflects the black bourgeoisies' struggle for acceptance and suffering for owning the presence in white society with physical strength as well as psychological

battle. This battle imprinted suffering and difficulties in the mind of author as trauma. In “Unclaimed Experience”, Cathy Caruth defines trauma as:

Trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. Through the notion of trauma we can understand that a rethinking of reference is not aimed at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding. (181-182)

Jefferson’s memoir deals with racial trauma, rejection and personal reflection, struggle and wounds given by racial differentiation haunts her repetitively wherever she goes and her conscious attacked by the imposed ideological being low rather than whites.

As Hall claims “the question of “identity” is being vigorously debated. The loss of stable “sense of self” constitutes a “crisis of identity” (597). Jefferson’s politics of memory does provide the issue of cultural construction of racism and identity by ideologically imposed towards the Blacks which is not real and natural whereby author feels crisis of their identity due to white privileged racist society which have impaired the real identity and infected into the memory with turmoil the psychology of author. Hereby author presents individual trauma of racism and exclusion she had experience which represents the collective experience of African- American aristocrat. Sociologist Ron Eyerman argues:

Personal trauma influenced in the writing. The impact of shocking occurrences which profoundly affect an individual’s life. Such “inner catastrophes” leave wounds and memory scars that cannot easily be erased and which influence later behaviour in unexpected and unpredictable ways. Trauma at the individual level resembles crisis at the societal level. A crisis, such as a severe economic depression is a shocking occurrence which can cause a breakdown in daily routines and expose at the same

time the largely taken for granted values that guide them: crisis in this sense reveal to a collective the grounds of its collective identity. (42)

Jefferson's elitist social status and position is defeated in front of the American society which stands on the hierarchy of skin color, wealth, inheritance, status and the white privileged ideologies. Her memoir deals with the social as well as cultural pressure upon the general as well as elite African- American which has tormented in psyche of author and to prevent this crisis she search for the escape route.

*Negroland A Memoir* reflects how the American society is intrigue with racism and African-Americans have been victim of racial trauma. When individual and collective encounters with the social/cultural enforcement of racial division or discrimination and witness or experience this enforcement directly or indirectly that negatively impact on the psychology or mental state of people of color could be known as racial trauma that also effects later in victim's behaviour because these racial trauma may cause the low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, humiliation and sense of exclusion. Whereby Dottie Lebron conceptualizes:

The trauma of racism refers to the cumulative negative impact of racism on the loves of people of color, encompassing the emotional, psychological, health, economic and social effects of multigenerational and historical trauma, trauma of racism relates to the damaging effects of ongoing societal and intra-social group racial micro aggressions, internalized racism overt racist experiences, discrimination and oppressed within the lives of people of color. (10)

Person's experience makes difference in the narration and inscription. Trauma describes generally shocking/catastrophic occurrences that repetitively affects individual's life shows the unexpected behaviour. Deep down sigh upon the grief of ashamed of "black body" and addressing of "darkies" or "nigger" she refrain; "How does someone like this, so often

ashamed of what she is, always ashamed of what she lacks, write about herself?”, “I’m going to change my tone now. I think it’s too easy to recount unhappy memories when you write about yourself. You bask in your own innocence. You revere your grief. You arrange your angers at their most becoming angles” (2). Portrayal of personal trauma relating with racial division have influenced in writing of this memoir.

The impact of racial segregation is shockingly perceived by author that remained in her child psychology with aging she acknowledged social reality and causes, experience series of events and learned about the effects. “Negroland” her symbolic place taught her everything about her race, ethnicity and difference of the color which is the undeletable and unchanged truth that makes author unease where Colin Grant anyway mostly found:

As its title suggests, this is a bold and defiant work that enumerates the credits and deficits of black life: Jefferson’s reflections are leavened by a sharp wit and a literary rolling of the eyes when dissecting the nuances of prejudice. The black body threatens always to bring shame and dread to its owner. She largely eschews fury but charts other shades of resentment- showing for example that working-class black Americans can better deal with white privilege than with black. (22)

Jefferson’s captivating memoir search for the belongings where she is verily bonded to the “Negroland” where she is safest from the biasness because it is her owned by elite Blacks. Racial issue is weight and reflected in this memoir. Author dissects the social, cultural, political, ethical, moral and economic distribution of Chicago where black body is reason of domination. Even the lower class whites become higher then elite Blacks.

Scott W. Joan argues in her book *Experience*, “they take as self-evident the identities of those whose experience is being documented and thus naturalized” and “when experience is taken as the origin of knowledge, the vision of the individual subject becomes the bedrock of evidence upon which explanation is built” (25). Personal benefit of whites through the

naturalization of racism, have loathed Negroes for centuries with physical and psychological torture. Even elite Blacks become the victim of this white privileged practice in the Chicago.

Author presents the trauma due to racism in her memoir; “there are so many ways to be ambushed by insult and humiliation” (58), “they don’t talk about anything but us. What we do, how we look, how much they hate us” (68), “thighbone-wielding cannibals, skull-faced witch doctors, wide mouthed lowlife Negroes, whooping and hollering in the streets, pig-fat Negroes prancing in red coats, doffing red top hat” (75). It is apparent white supremacy operating in the lives of African people significantly confining them in limited periphery of societal dimension evidently they are suppress to achieve the shared goal of prosperity and these disabilities have affected multiple generations with physical, psychological, emotional and social effects that creates low self-esteem with sense of powerlessness/degradation. Whereas Maurice Stevens explores:

Race has played a pivotal role in the formation of contemporary notion of memory, identify and trauma that are based on interior experiences of overwhelming exterior event. From Freud, Darwin, and the scientific racisms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the post pleasurable traumas of WWII and the recuperative practices of American clinical psychology and neurobiology, psychoanalytic theories and psychotherapeutic practices have been unable to take up racialization as a social process that produce some subjects as vulnerable to traumatogenic injury and others as not. (4)

Implicit bias and racial discrimination has brought the trauma to the colored people. Race is pivotal for overwhelming distinctions which have suppress and brought the injuries to the kind of author. Author searches for psychological needs for outcome from this sociological chaos which has blurred the speciality of her race which is different from grounded Negroes. Racism habitualized in the American society as the prominent culture and internalized in the

psychology of people as it is an inextricable from white culture and society.

The memoir *Negroland* dissect the social-cultural system of Chicago which provides the sufficient ironical situation created by power politics and ideology of supreme whites whereby puritan whites were guided by the preconceived ideology such made by their ancestors that divides the people into different categories such as master/slave, superior/inferior not in the biological or natural but in manmade or constructed way such social-critic Louis Althusser propose; “Man is the ideological creature by nature. All ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects by the functioning of the category of the subject” (460-461). Author herself takes charge of the authority of memory and experiences in this text to excavate the history filled with discriminatory in terms of race and imposed identity towards Blacks which undergoes as naturalized or habitualized through the conceived ideology.

Experience primarily becomes the source of knowledge for seeking for equality and justice and her individual experience provides the evidences “that was an ugly game. That little girl was playing it to insult you. To insult Negroes and say we are like monkeys” (58). She claims that conventional socio-cultural hierarchy guided by white privileged ideological society that distinguish the human into different categories which is not natural rather constructed by powerful people against powerless one, this claim is worthy because author who have experienced this difficulties surely have the right position of authority to foretold the narrative about experiences she had.

Jefferson perform self-examination during the people/society around her is challenging, pressuring, and while creating difficulties in surviving which is hard to tackle. Social privilege, structure, superiority, and internalized beliefs have inhumed categorization among citizen and creating uncomfortable situation for black people. Same measuring used to evaluate to aristocrat Black as of dominated glaze to the poor and other African- American.

“Negroland” is symbolic word to indicate the small region chosen by Jefferson of limited elite Negroes who are intellectual, financially established and enjoying certain amount of privilege and plenty rather than other Caucasians with materially less/below them. This memoir is tribute to the ancestors who fought the great war of racial injustice through physically and poetry that filled with nationality/nativity lore that grim resonates against social-political system and violence: Charles Forten, Frederick Douglass, Langston Hughes, James Baldwin and Negro scholars Du Bois Woodson who had done serious studies of African race. .

Trauma particularly related to the mentality of person either physical is also contained and behaviour of infected as well. White domination is apparent upon the black people during the sixties in the American society as Kali Tal explores:

Within a society, there may be several targeted groups, whose members are subject to traumatization in greater or lesser degrees, targeted groups can and should be examined both in relation to the dominant group and to each other. Membership in the targeted group is determined on the basis of externally imposed definitions i.e. race, class, gender, religious affiliation which are created and enforced by dominant social groups and which once created are often internalized by members of targeted groups an incorporated into their individual self-concepts. In the United States, African Americans are targeted groups. (9)

Twentieth century was in turmoil of social-racial division between whites and blacks even-though socio-economically both are aristocrats and highly status holder yet the battle between pride of whites and existence of blacks always occurred in the America. “Inside of grief is shame” (29), Jefferson’s memoir is documented with tragedy of being darker than other which have become the measurement of their level.



Guiding by stereotypical ideology about the black people, American whites always treated them in hatred with dominated glaze, due to issue of racism which is prevailing on the era of the fifties and the sixties which is rooted with history of enslavement of black people from native Africa started from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and practiced in early colonial days after the independence of united states and before civil war. Tal further mentions:

In a situation of ongoing oppression or involving the risk of traumatic violence, many members of a targeted group will be victimized (some repeatedly), while other members will escape physical harm. In such circumstances, the category of trauma “survivor” is problematic, since every traumatized member of an oppressed community is aware of the potential for repeated victimization. (9)

Author’s self- revelation on her memoir brought the shock because it reveals the truth about black bourgeoisie of Chicago and bare truth how they are doubly excluded from two communities; one is the group of white and another is black who are under the lack of enough facility (poverty). Her surveillance about social structure and system of her surrounding two aspects are dominant: I. white domination since historical background who was guided by ideology of racial prejudices and II. Rejected by black community in term of accuse “living like a white”.

Her revelation expose two significant mysteries about the African- American one is the real economic position and intellectuality of the limited elite black which break the “myth” about general understanding about black people as they are poor, subvert, feeble, nomad/uncivilized (suitable for being slave) and another is they are victimize due to racial segregation as general Negroes. Economy, class, status, occupation and intellectuality all are denied by two others. Her good education, privileges, expensive and luxurious comfort she owns would not save her from the terror of bias of the Chicago.

*Negroland A Memoir* is a story/history about how black people emerged from the existencelessness/ groundless/nothingness and able to achieve prosperity, economic status and new identity. Black power movement is behind all of this significance accomplishment, “No wonder that when Black Power came along the next year I used it as an excuse to stop talking to various people I felt hadn’t respected or acknowledged me enough. Who said the personal always had to be honourably political?” (96). Jefferson’s revelation about African American with reformed social status and succeed to change an old identity with economic progress as well as in the intellectual elevation. The credit goes to the Caucasian ancestors who have done the hard work/struggle to fight with racial injustice and social preconceive doctrine and purchase the freedom, identity and privilege for their upcoming generation which author is enjoying.

Jefferson admire her parent for providing safety during the discriminatory inflicted society and teaching the great lesson to be survive with the highly and luxurious facility who have been fighting many battles against social biasness and still they have to hard work to prepare their children with providing best opportunities of education, proper guidance and psychologically strong to face the reality. Her mother has trained them everything about living in an aristocratic way and the qualities of being decent/sober woman. In the elevation of the African- American’s status in various social dimensions, mothers have played the crucial role as author brings the reference of organization such as “Jack and Jill” which they are also indentured launching by African-American mothers:

It all began in Philadelphia in 1938 with a loving mother and a simple idea, Marison Stubbs Thomas approached a group of mothers with a vision for a new kind of club-one focused not on the mothers themselves, but on stimulating social and cultural relationships among their children and instilling the values and leadership skills that would serve them well into adulthood. Passionate about its mission, Jack and Jill of

America dedicates its resources to improving the quality of life for children, particularly African-American children. The concept was so inspiring it soon spread to other cities and other states. In 1947, Jack and Jill of America were incorporated under the laws of the State of Delaware as a no-profit organization. (3)

The formation of new identity down from slavery was not an easy route to take but due to social movement to erase the inhuman treatment, such as black right movement and black lives matters have provided the chance to advancement in level of colored people in America. Black bourgeoisies are self-made from the hardship and the contribution of their ancestors should not deny who bleed for to make a way to freedom.

“Elitist” carries the both qualities Jefferson and her own kind inherit: I. economic establishment and II. Intellectual capacity (education, sophistication, skill), they are white privilege free Negroes whose ancestor gives them more access to well placed. Author remember how they leap toward richness (of economy), “They learned their letters and their manners; they learned skilled trades such as barber, caterer, baker, jeweller, machinist, tailor, dressmaker; they were the best trained servants in the better white homes and hotels”, “They bought real estate; published newspaper, established schools and churches; formed clubs, mutual aid societies. Go into the business of upward mobility” (6). She is the new generation “Who were given favourable treatment, money, property and even freedom by well-born Caucasian owners, employers and parents” (6). Though they have native blood of Africa and belong to black race yet some leapt towards dynamic changes and become the elite Negroes and some lacked ability to be change and remain the same as they are taken as granted as author writes “Inside the race we were the self-designed aristocrat, educated, affluent, accomplished; to Caucasians we were oddities, underdogs and interlopers” (54). Crisis and difficulties felt by black aristocrat could reveal by Franklin Frazier in “Black Bourgeoisie”:

Although the old black bourgeoisie was not able to find a refuge in the world of the Negro folk nevertheless they were sheltered to some extent against the contempt and terror of the white man because they lived within the segregated Negro world. Negro bourgeoisies were affected by ideas concerning the Negroes inferiority but perhaps even more because they had adopted the white man's values and patterns of behaviour. (146-147)

Rise of black bourgeoisies have given the pain in both parties first to white who thought themselves as heir of privilege and second to the ground/ working black people who are unable to acquire any privileges and blaming to the newly aristocrat as they have ignore the aesthetic values, ethics and way of live of Negroes and they have possess the "Way of living of white" following/accepting their guidance/style as imposing white culture into Negroes's live could perform as cultural imposition.

Even though America is economically classified society but it is not applicable in the case of race. Economic establishment became an obstacle to intermingle with her own race whereby Frazier further denounces:

Following the initial shock of self-revelation was intense anger on the part of many leaders in the Negro community. This anger was based largely upon their feeling that I had betrayed Negroes by revealing their life to the white worked. I was attacked by some Negroes as being bitter because I had not been accepted socially and by others as having been paid to defame the Negro. In one Negro newspaper there was a sly suggestion that Negroes should use violence to punish me for being a traitor to the Negro race. Some of the anger was undoubtedly due to the fact that I had revealed the real economic position of the Negro. (Preface 2)

Gradually establishing black elites have faced the crisis when they were rejected by their own race and writers who revealed the truth about rising black aristocrat which have decreased the

working class black inferiority complex. Jefferson memorizes again “Caucasians with materially less than us were given license by Caucasians with more than them to subvert and attack our privilege” (54). The limbo situation has also risen within economic upend.

Racism is significant problematic issue of the marginalization. Furthermore imposed superiority of whites and their discrimination upon black is extravagated which have spoiled the history of African people. Wicked mentality of white American had messed the introduction of Negroes. As African theorist Du Bois argues:

Race is, in terms of sociohistorical rather than biological or physical criteria. It is a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language always of common history, traditions and impulses who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life. (7)

Race is the baseline of discrimination in America. It have created the hoax beliefs about white is greater than black. Distinction based on the manmade rather biological or scientifically proved but guided by the supreme idea of white to oppress black people for their benefit mentally and physically. Race and racism have oppressed black people for centuries.

Louis Tyson defines racism as “unequal power relations that grow from the socio-political domination of one race by another and that result in systematic discriminatory practices such as segregation, domination and persecution-one has to be in a position of power as a member of the whites” (360). Memory of childhood of author is intricate with racial wound and alienation in case of “doubly exclusion” firstly rejected by whites and another by same clan of Negroes who were under the circumstances of poverty accusing elite blacks to forgetting aesthetic/vital value/culture of blacks and accepting and trying to be whites. Shame of black body, alienation, insults and insecurities drove her to attempt suicide

numerous times that created the traumatic experience and memory about her life which necessarily needed to egress.

Author's suicidal attempt reveals her distorted psyche because of her childhood memory and experience of racial inequality and the insult upon being "dark skin" surely made scar that totally freak into her innocent psychology that haunt her till adulthood. She remembers early summer of 1956 in Atlantic City:

...he turns it back again, he stops. "Oh, here you are, Doc. the hotel is so crowded this week. We had to change your room." trailing their daughters, the father and mother follow the uniformed bellboy into the elevator. It stops a few floors up; they get out; he leads them to the end of a long hall then around a corner, unlocks the door, and puts their suitcases just inside a small room which leads into another small room. (55)

She narrates childhood incident where she first encounters with racial discrimination and she found out the truth about how they are treated in the public places as her family was forced to change the hotel room, previously they have reservation for luxurious room and after being known they are non-white provided with narrow and uncomfortable room. She narrates how her mother get irritate with service and told her husband to leave as soon as possible:

We're looking out on a parking lot. we resent the bad mood that has come over our parents. We want the beach and we want the boardwalk we've been promised since the trip began. Mother pauses, and then addresses her and us. "This is a prejudiced place, what kind of service would we get in that restaurant? Look at these shabby rooms. Pretending they couldn't find the reservation. We're leaving tomorrow. And your father will tell them why." (55)

Bitter experiences always strike on the memory of individual and it always suppress the joy and fill with the bad memories which is difficult to cope up and accept as a simple and easily.

*Negroland* is a discourse of resentment of author. Her dissidence about “being associated with the wrong kind of black people who made it hard for the rest of us” (54). She is verily bonded to her race and she longs for nativity so she has titled the memoir as “Negroland” which is vague and symbolic. Author wants to reform internalized definition of her race. She exclaims:

I call it Negroland because I still find “Negro” a word of wonders, glorious and terrible. A word for runaway slave posters and civil rights proclamations; for social constructs and street corner flaunts. A tonal language word whose meaning shifts as setting and context shift as history twists, lurches, advances and stagnates, as capital letters appears to enhance its dignity’ as other nomenclatures arise to challenge its primacy. I call it Negroland because Negro dominated our history for so long; because I lived with its meanings and intimations for so long’ because they were essential to my first discoveries of what race meant or as we now say, how race was constructed.

(4)

Author is verily rooted with her history of race and native land “Africa”. How she is bonded to her ethnic race and nationality, at eleven she was fascinated towards the poems/songs filled with nationality of Africa/Congo, “I whispered it, I chanted it, I read it silently. I read it alone in my room and I never told anyone. My reading was furtive and excited, filled with voluptuous loathing. The Congo was my first pornography” (76). Being colored is the gift of nature for her though it is the issue of bias yet she found “Negro” amazing, meaningful and reminiscence of historic which is rooted to their original identity.

Traumatic memory interrupts in the psyche of person later it seen in the behaviour of victim. They stay in the state of acting out. Bitter experience and memories creates the trauma to the person which undergoes to the unconscious or subconscious mind that needs to be egress otherwise it will explode and the consequences could be manic so traumatic

memories and experiences should share, expel and narrate through different medium oral, written form as memoir, autobiography, journal or diary or other to be share with global audiences only then victim could act as normal with maintaining the trauma within self otherwise it interrupt in a present moment with reoccurring that brings crisis upon victim's life.

In *Negroland A Memoir*, Jefferson entangled with racial discrimination and obsessive memories of suicidal impulses. Author experience of doubly exclusion in the society, neither accepted by whites nor by black community she lingers between rejection that lead her to perform suicidal attempt several times during her childhood/adulthood. She randomly elucidate upon the craving of suicide not only herself but others too:

The first unapologetic black female suicide took place in a small off-Broadway theatre in 1964 in a short gothic play by a fiercely imaginative Negro woman playwright. I wasn't there but I understood that Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* was as much a demand for freedom as the Civil Rights Act passed the same year. Nella Larson's novels and "her women stumble into suicide by misadventure or miscalculation. They avoid premeditation just as they avoid stringent self-reflection", Ntozake Shange's theatrical words "And this is for colored girls who have considered suicide" and "Now we could consider-toy with, ponder, contemplate-suicide". (105-106)

Belonging to the Negro clan she is rejected by whites of America in terms of race and being higher upper class she is rejected by the working class African- American people. They live in different situation with different identity and isolation. Issue of domination, categorization goes through established beliefs on skin color based measurement by Eurocentric whites that cause demolishing the dignity and self-esteem of Negroes. Kenneth V. Hardy writes about how one begins the puppetry with creating internalized devaluation:



Internalized devaluation is a direct by product of racism, inextricably linked to the deification of whiteness and the demonization of non-white hues. It is perpetrated throughout society including in the very systems with the stated mission of serving youth. This reinforces a powerful message internalized since childhood-“I am bad and unworthy”. Racial devaluation is intertwined with other affronts to dignity such as neglect, abuse and rejection. (25)

Self-devaluation causes the psychological degradation and that brings the negative vibes in individual who accepts defeat and unable to perform the progress in life. In another words of Dominick Lacapra it is “acting out” that refers to “in which one is haunted or possessed by the past and performativity caught up in the compulsive repletion of traumatic scenes-scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop” (21). When individual suffers from self-degradation and low self-esteem could not perform well in life as well as in future. Victim of it mourn over past and could not think what will be better to do.

Author’s memory of humiliation and rejection shows the societal structure of then where every black has tormented with racial injustice and contempt. Lacapra juxtapose:

Working through is an articulatory practice to the extent one works through trauma (as well as transference relations in general) one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one (or one’s people) back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to the future. This does not imply either that there is a pure opposition between past and present or that acting out-whether for the traumatized or for those empathetically relating to them can be fully transcended toward a state of closure or full ego identity. But it does mean that processes of working through may counteract the force of acting out and the repetition compulsion. (22)

“Working through” is significant process to eliminate the depression of individual though it is psychological or physical because it provides the escaping route and lead towards reengagement/back to the normal life with erasing the bad memories and therapeutic for traumatized one. Author adopts working through to forget about the traumatic past and erase the painful memories how she tried to finish herself with “I thought to put my head inside the oven” (96). The memoir has become the preclusion of trauma of racism or racial segregation and suicidal impulses of author as implied therapeutic intervention or self-healing or as an escaping route.

Judgement and evaluation based upon the color are stinging with injury in the history of African- American where author’s vindication for the position in the society with their feature and distinct identity as well as equality and justice.

Jefferson achieved education, ambition and sophistication and learned about the cruelty, social inequality and hatred in she love to call-“Negroland”. Being aristocrat she is able to afford opportunities and everything she wants than who cannot purchase the facilities. Her economic status shows she must have better life but in reality it is undercut by sense of alienation, rejection and fear to make a mistake to her family and race as well. Being the testimony herself of disastrous history Jefferson remarks testimonial imprint in this memoir with recalling the past in order to narrate/stress out her struggle or suffering through organizing synchronically events of her life with negotiating understandable language in a linear way.

*Negroland A Memoir*, modeled in the form of scriptotherapy by Jefferson for eradicate the trauma of racism as proposed by Suzette A. Henke as to signal the ways in which autobiographical writing functions as a mode of self-healing, scriptotherapy includes the processes of both “writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic re-enactment” (Life Writing and Autobiography 202). Self-healing through

scriptotherapy, about the social disjuncture and biasness she experience not only herself but her clan known as “black elites” or “the colored elite”. She struggle to find ways to narrate about her difficult past, bitter experience of growing up in white dominated American society and fragmented memories with racial wound. Henke presents individual trauma have “hidden spaces between words that cannot be uttered” (126). Fragmented memory and experience due to sufficient and luxurious life in upper-higher class with privileges and exile or alienation because of it furthermore the racial biasness has made the double trauma to the author.

In the appendage of relieving the trauma Dabyden propose the ways performed by Olaudah Equiano to eradicate the trauma of being black slave during eighteen century and about cruelty and suffering:

Equiano is always tactical in his addresses, adopting the persona of a rogue, or seeing things through a child’s eye, so as to make his message acceptable, he will not assault his audience with a catalogue of their crimes, even though he is convinced of their greed and stupidity, for the task at hand is not to assault the whites but to free his people. Even his marriage to an English woman was primarily for the sake of physical comfort. His business was with strategies to relieve the suffering of his own people. (224-25)

Jefferson has adopted numerous strategies to relieve from the racial trauma as addressing the whites friends of her school as alphabetical name such as A, S, B, G, D, P or Mr. J. or so on, “You should feel honoured that S likes you. They don’t allow Negroes in his parents’ building”, “I’d been to D’s house too” or “My friend P’s grandfather would ask” (78). She does not assault to whites rather expressing her repressed rage of humiliation and out castrated from the civilized European society. The issue of outing is not the personal yet collective experience and bitter reality which author readdressed in her memoir to console the

depressed souls while bringing the justice to the victim in front of global audiences, which is the prime concern of her to excavate into the history of within/self.

This memoir is discourse of maintaining individual agony of racial trauma through working through in form of scriptotherapy, healing self from disastrous dream alike and searching for life, meaning of existence and her vocation for racial equality, humanity and justice provocative through entire text. Kenneth V. Hardy suggests eight steps to healing hidden wounds of racial trauma (Affirmation and Acknowledgement, Create space for Race, Racial Storytelling, Validation, Rechanneling Rage, The Process of Naming, Externalize Devaluation, and Counteract Devaluation). One of them is “internalize devaluation”, he presumes:

This is the direct way to heal the wounds of internalized devaluation. Stated simply we help youth understand why respect and the absence of respect are so important.

They learn to recognize that devaluation and disrespect are directly connected to race and race oppression. Further, some of their problem behaviour may have been counterproductive ways to try to gain respect; the goal is to increase their thirst for respect and to recognize that assaults on their dignity do not lessen their self-worth.

(28)

Author’s arousal of high self- esteem and awareness with her intellectual and economic status has provided lead to survive within biased society; she started to retelling about history from slavery to aristocrat, stories of ancestors and their contribution, changed identity with economic establishment and racial discrimination in her memoir to convert her sorrowful experience into the strength one.

Jefferson represents collective symbol of black aristocrat who have an experience of doubly exclusion, social pressure, sense of separation which encourages of engendered through fighting back with all obstacles. What author and members of black upper-higher

class thought themselves as “The Third Race, poised between the masses of Negroes and all classes of Caucasians” (30). Reinterpreting of the suffering of colored people she demands for the equal right of the recognition as European whites, as a human and with distinct identity.

*Negroland A Memoir* is documenting resentment, advancement and elevation of African-American who have gone through historical differentiation based on race, color and minority (voiceless), oppression of European whites even though new generations have acquired the privileges similar as whites and live in luxury. Yet economic status has lost before the social status which is evidently portrayed by Jefferson in memory. Struck by the racial discrimination the new clan of “colored aristocrat” who stuck at middle of nowhere and victim of double rejection, being able to afford everything they cannot escape from social system and society have caused the racial trauma which should be evacuate by the retelling way of Jefferson in numerous form- writing, speaking, telling story and working through which provides the reengagement again into the normal life, performing best rather than before with erasing sad memories and gaining new experience, leading life towards new world or freedom.

This memoir investigates ethics, politics of history and power that influence in the socio-political and socio-cultural structure. Memory works out as a recorder which foretold how racism was constructed and imposed in the psyche of American people and demonstrated in behaviour. Different experience than other where author had deal with double pressure and exclusion from the society as her memory always struck and numbness by the trauma of this event.

There is always way out to overcome an obstacles however Jefferson has performed by working through and scriptotherapy to gain new identity, psychological freedom which is the most to overcome from the racial trauma as well as suffering of exclusion or boycott.

Self-healing own psychology and boosting the self-esteem is the essential as Jefferson suggest which enable people to eradicate bad memories and learn from the bygone experience and again reengaging, re-enacting and co-opting into the society with normal behaviour and calm mind and living normal life. While struggling with the social pressure and traumatizing from racial bias, excluded from own race or confined in Negroland with tagging as evil at last she is able healing from as well as narrate her agonies, trauma, struggle and suffering through *Negroland A Memoir*.

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