

## **Depiction of Racism And Discrimination By Toni Morrison In ‘The Bluest Eye’**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The paper explores the racism and discrimination in Toni Morrison’s novel “the bluest eye” in this novel the bluest eye Toni Morrison depicts how women have suffered under male dominance and how black female characters have oppressed under the white rule. The Bluest Eye, examines the tragic effects of imposing white, middle-class American ideals of beauty on the developing female identity of a young African American girl during the early 1940s.. The theme of race and that white skin is greater is portrayed through the lives and stories told by the characters, especially the three girls Claudia, Pecola and Frieda. Through the struggles those people have endured, Morrison shows us the destructive effect of this internalized idea of white beauty on the individual and on society. The female characters have been facing the traumatic situations like race gender class difference black poor. These are systems of social and psychological oppression that have affected the lives of blacks women’s in general and particularly Afro-American women’s. They have oppressed mentally as well as physically.*

*Keywords: Racism,Discrimination,Slavery, Black identity, Oppression,Violence.*

### **Citation of this article**

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### **Introduction:**

The novel, through flashbacks, explores the younger years of both of Pecola's parents, Cholly and Pauline, and their struggles as African-Americans in a largely White Anglo-Saxon

Protestant community. Pauline now works as a servant for a wealthier white family. One day in the novel's present time, while Pecola is doing dishes, a drunken Cholly rapes her. His motives are largely confusing, seemingly a combination of both love and hate. After raping her a second time, he flees, leaving her pregnant. Claudia and Frieda are the only two in the community that hope for Pecola's child to survive in the coming months. Consequently, they give up the money they had been saving to buy a bicycle, instead planting marigold seeds with the superstitious belief that if the flowers bloom, Pecola's baby will survive. The marigolds never bloom, and Pecola's child, who is born prematurely, dies. In the aftermath, a dialogue is presented between two sides of Pecola's own deluded imagination, in which she indicates strangely positive feelings about her rape by her father. In this internal conversation, Pecola speaks as though her wish has been granted: she believes that she now has blue eyes.

Claudia, as narrator a final time, describes the recent phenomenon of Pecola's insanity and suggests that Cholly (who has since died) may have shown Pecola the only love he could by raping her. Claudia lastly laments on her belief that the whole community, herself included, have used Pecola as a sort of scapegoat to make they feel prettier and happier.

In her first novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Morrison examines the perspective view of black community about beauty and the psychological damages it created to the black women. *The Bluest Eye* takes place in Morrison's home town of Lorain, Ohio. In the novel, the black community of Lorain is separated from the upper-class white community, also known as Lake Shore Park, a place where blacks are not permitted, unless they are employed by a white family. Morrison portrays two black families – the MacTeers who have the inner strength to face poverty and discrimination of racist society and the Breedloves, on other hand, is lacking without those strength. Pecola Breedlove is a young African American girl coming of age during the 1940s. She longs to be loved and accepted by her own community as well as in a world which rejects and diminishes the value of the members of her own race and defines beauty according to an Anglo Saxon cultural standard. Pecola believe that if she has blue eyes, which is the symbol of white beauty; she will be beautiful just like Shirley Temple and will be loved by everyone. Her yearning to have blue eyes culminates in madness. She is ignoring the reality that she cannot have blue eyes. Moreover she thinks that if she can have blue eyes then her parents will stop quarrelling and they will all live happily. But those images affect the black women on the level of the body and in terms of how they understand their own sexuality. The

novel describes a continual fluctuation between one thing and wanting its opposite. A black woman fails to appreciate their own race in terms of beauty for they believe beauty means white. They search their identity in being white because they are scared of being discriminated by their surroundings. Pecola has so little sense of self worth, however that her anger quickly turns back to shame an overwhelming, self-blaming, self-hating emotion. Every time when she tries to live her surroundings make her realised that she is ugly and not worthy even for touch. So Pecola self-segregates herself in order to earn self-respect. Whenever their brother and parents fight she shut herself up in the room and prays to God to make her disappear: "Little parts of her body faded away. Now slowly, now with a rush. Slowly again her fingers went, one by one; then her arms disappeared all the hardest above the thighs. She had to be real still and pull. Her stomach would not go. But finally it, too, went away then her chest, her neck. The face was hard, too. Almost done almost. Only her tight, tight eyes were left. They were always left." (Morrison, *Bluest Eye* 39)

But for Pecola's mother this fight gives her an identity. She considers herself a good Christian woman burdened by a worthless husband as punishment from God. She often speaks to Jesus about Cholly's sins. Once, during a fight, Cholly falls on the stove, and she yells out for Jesus to take him. Mrs. Breedlove needs Cholly's sins for her sense of self. Cholly Breedlove also needs her. If he hates her, he can keep his own identity free. By the end of the novel, her life is full of hatred which compels her to isolate herself. She is hated by mother who considers Pecola as 'ugly', her father rapes her and is not able to live a worthwhile life which lead to perpetual frustration and drives into madness. And above that she is again subjugated by her own people, own race. Even among her own community Pecola longs for belongingness. Thus Morrison attacks the socially constructed Western images of beauty and the psychological damages it create to black women. Morrison (1974:89) rightly points out: "When the strength of a race depends on its beauty, when the focus is turned to how one looks as opposed to what one is, we are in trouble."

Thus she analyses the ways of being that are ridiculed, demonized, declared inferior and irrational, and, in some cases, eliminated. But the community reinforces the identities of its members through belief and heritage and individuals must

remain a part of the collectivity in order to be innately complete. Claudia, although she abhors the white ideals which are internalized by her community, she is accepting her heritage and blackness. In *The Bluest Eye* Morrison also analyses the boundaries of black society that are set and defined by the dominant white community. Black people always admire the white geographical boundary but they are not allowed to enter unless they are employed by the white people. When Claudia and Frieda MacTeer go in search of Pecola at Lake Shore Park where Pecola's mother Pauline works for a white family, known as the Fishers. The girls "admire the beautiful house with great furniture and gardens but their visit is short-lived as Pauline becomes furious at Pecola for tipping over a pan of blueberry cobbler, "Crazy fool...my floor, mess...look what you...work...get on out...her words were hotter and darker than the smoking berries and we backed away in dread" (Morrison, *Bluest Eye* 109). This clearly shows the discriminatory treatment over the black people by the white people. So Morrison tries to give a clear picture of how black society yearns for their identity amidst hybridized culture. The novel reflects the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between White and Black. Thus the relationship becomes ambivalent because the black subject is never simply and completely opposed to the White. Hence a black woman who is dissatisfied with the way she is treated in the society because of the black colour of her skin can choose the option of doing almost everything to change this situation. Black Women have been victimized not only by racist, sexist and class bias, but also by scholarly neglect, yet, over the centuries they have tried to present their case, their quest for freedom and attempts at self-assertion through literature. Race, class and gender have figured prominently as theme in black women's writing over the years. There are some important writers like Racial Harper, who wrote in their nineteenth century, including Zora Neale Hurston, and Alice Walker. Morrison also belongs to this group of writers who have tried to trace the development of black women's image from its infantile stage of invisibility to its present of self-definition and assertion. Morrison is an expert lecturer, educator, editor, essay writer, literary critic and short story writer, but it is her work as a novelist that makes her such a significant member of the Black American canon. Class exploitation is perhaps the greatest source of oppression of blacks in white America. The class issue is an important one as it is linked to capitalism, the system which divides society into two classes: 'master'

and 'slaves' The whites have been the monopoly class under this system while the blacks have been the marginal. The black women, like the black men, were also working. The black women had to work on plantation farms as laborers and also as "mammy's" or maids in the kitchens of the white households. They were generally looked upon as menials. It is, however, important to note that race, class and gender have been interrelated in the history of black women. They, infact, originated from the same set of circumstances and are motivated by economic, social and psychological forces. Gloria WaseGyles explains this through an imagery of circles: "There are three major circles of reality in American society, which reflected degrees of power and powerlessness. There is a large circle in which white people, most of the men, experience Influence and power. Far sway form in there in small circle, narrow space, in which there are the black people regardless of sex, experience, uncertainty, exploitation and powerlessness. Hidden in this second circle is a third, a small dark enclosure in which black women experience pain, illation and vulnerability. These are the distinguishing marks of black womanhood in white America"

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