



# The Plight Of The Blacks In Toni Morrison's Beloved

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**Abstract:** Toni Morrison is a part of a long black and American literary tradition. Her novels are multi voiced and multi layered. She takes the novel home to the intimate address of the rural and urban African and American tradition. Her characters are seldom in powerful and social positions. They commend their desire in an outlawed agency that puts into crisis the law of the land. She herself played an active role in promoting black voices. 'Beloved' is a magnificent novel in which a slave's interior life is re-created with a moving intensity. The novel explores the physical, emotional, and spiritual devastation constructed by slavery, a devastation that continues to appear in those characters who are former slaves even in freedom.

Toni Morrison, a black American was born Chloe Anthony Wofford, on 18 February 1931, the second of four children, in Lorain, Ohio. She grew up in an environment steeped in black culture, ritual, music and language, in family that encouraged her to believe in herself and be proud of her origins. When she entered first grade at school, Chole was the black child in the class, and the only child who knew how to read.

In an interview with Nellie Mckay she would explain that all her work had to do with hooks. If all her work can be traced to an interest in books, it is also unified by passion black history and issues of black identity. Toni Morrison holds an unusual position within the ranks of black female writers, a group usually restricted to the fringe of the literary establishment. She has had amazing success in her life and work, and has received national and international acclaim.

Apart from many awards in 1993, she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature the first time that this award had been given to an African American. Her readership is wide-ranging: the appeal of her work crosses racial, cultural and class boundaries. Her novels are studied for their insights into both black culture and feministic theories, and are enthusiastically read by black and white readers alike.

Besides her novel Beloved, she has written eight other novels: The Bluest Eye, Sula, Song of Solomon, Tar Baby, Jazz, Paradise, Love, the latest one being The Mercy. Their settings and themes gradually broaden. Beloved, Jazz and Paradise were conceived as a trilogy, each chronicling black women's search for a sense of self. Beloved is the text that has scaled Morrison's reputation and has generated most discussion and literary criticism. The Beloved has had spectacular acclaim for its intense and extraordinary features. It has been described as: 'a stunning book and lasting achievement transforms the sorrows of history into luminous truth of art'. It has also been hailed as: 'a milestone in the chronicling of the black experience in America' (Publisher's Weekly).

Beloved, describes a black culture born out of a dehumanizing period of slavery just after the Civil War. Culture is a means of how a group collectively believes, acts, and interacts on a daily basis. Those who have studied her work refer to Morrison's narrative tales as "literature....that addresses the sacred and as an allegorical representation of black experience" (Baker-Fletcher 1993:2). Although African Americans had a difficult line establishing their own culture during the period of slavery when they were considered less than human, Morrison believes that black culture has been built on the horrors of the past and it is the history that has shaped contemporary black culture in a positive way.

Tony Morrison's *Beloved* is a multicultural novel resembling the different voices of blacks slaves in a very ironical tone, in the form of Black narrative. Tony Morrison's concern lies in the multicultural aspects of black community.

Set in Ohio, the book focuses on Sethe; Sethe's surviving daughter, Denver; Sethe's mother-in-law, Baby Suggs; and the ghost of Sethe's dead daughter, Beloved. Throughout the book, "Morrison communicates an unforgettable sense of the strength, terror and devastation that is part of the black community, whilst skilfully portraying the unalterable connections between spiritual and physical life" (Morey 1988: 1093).

Beloved represents the multiple voices of black slaves who were compelled to be displaced due to the brutal behave of their masters. Inside their own position how black was brutalized near the death is another important aspect of *Beloved*. The protagonist Sethe and her long experience as slave gives the vision of black culture and its compulsion of being the puppet in the hand of inhuman situation.

It describes how black culture's identity has been hidden inside the vast mist of white's and their inhuman behaviou has also been well depicted in the novel. Black culture could not get its influence in the society due to the cause of white dominating culture. They used blacks as the medium of their sexual fulfilment and childbearing machine without regarding their motherhood and humanity. Black slaves were exploited and used as white's source of entertainment by raping their virginity. It is another hidden voice of black culture in Tony Morrison's *Beloved*.

Through the use of linguistic devices, her representation of black women, imagery and symbolic features, and the theme of interracial relations, Morrison illustrates that black culture is resilient, vibrant, independent, and determined.

One linguistic device used throughout the novel is the use of songs. Slaves use songs as a way to pass down stories but also to help them maintain a sense of inner strength. Morrison "shows how song defines and affirms slave "personhood" in a world where slave humanity is constantly challenged and denied" (Capuano 2003: 1). Rather than thinking of song in a negative fashion, "it chronicles her characters' endurance and ability to survive during and after these periods of physical brutality and psychological abuse" that they experienced during slavery (Capuano 2003: 2). This illustrates how black culture has resilience and an ability to overcome hardship. Singing is an essential aspect of the characters' lives alongside food, sleep, and shelter. As the novel related, if Paul D could "walk, eat, sleep, [and] sing," he could survive and "asked for no more" (Morrison 1987: 41). While others may not understand the jargon used in the songs, those singing it and other slaves hearing those songs know what it means, and this is a way to strike some independence and distinct culture for themselves during a period where it is uncommon to think of blacks as even human (Capuano 2003: 4). This community of song enables those within black culture to become stronger. It is the "collective sharing of that information heals the individuals – and the collective" (Morey 1988: 1039). In revisiting Morrison's overall theme of turning traumatic memories into a positive force, the songs are a cathartic process used to take this memory, which is "vital for revision communal and social transformation that is healing" (Baker-Fletch 1993: 4). It is the singing of the women that help exorcise the ghost of *Beloved* and enable Sethe to break free as if she has been baptized (Morrison 1987: 308). The novel describes Sethe as running into the faces of the people out there, joining them and leaving *Beloved* behind" (Morrison 1987: 309).

In addition to songs as a linguistic device, Morrison constantly returns to the word "rememory" and "disremember" rather than using words, such as "remember" or "forget". Morrison uses rememory to show how Sethe constantly keeps the past in her present existence because she cannot forget what happened and lives with the ghost of her guilty conscience and moral dilemma for murdering her daughter and living through slavery. For example, Sethe explains how she struggles with the past:

It's so hard form to believe in [time]. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just say. I used to think it was my rememory.... But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a hours burns down, it's gone, but the place the picture of it-stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world" (Morrison 1987: 36).

Racism is one of the most important and broad field in Beloved under which the cultural identity has extremely been hidden or captured by the bitter behaviour of whites masters. As a result Morrison raises the cultural aspects of blacks, which has been subdivided in different corners. In that sense Beloved represents multiple voices of black slaves who died in Middle passage, who escaped from the south and scattered across the north. It also represents the countless voices of black slaves turned timeless by their monstrous voices of slaves. The very preventative of Beloved's role shows the spiritual aspects of black culture under which they live with some certain expectations.

There are different layers of the black culture's voice in the entire novel Beloved. Due to the prevailed slavery how black culture's identity and freedom has been lost is one of the central cultural voice of Morrison in Beloved. Around this voice of the freedom of black culture, demand of the same of the basic human rights of black culture, the forceful protest against the sexual exploitation and displacement of whole black culture. They are demanding their own black culture existence into their society regarding the political, social and economical and other different aspects of practical fields.

Sethe, as an ex- slave presents the whole historical background of the blacks. The course of slavery and racism both have hunted the main characters and other all members lack community. All the characters worked hard to avoid their bitter past in the entire Sethe is extremely trying to hide her past and by taking the lesson from the past entering to keep their children safe from the brutality of the slave owner. From the planning to the end Morrison narrates only about the position of blacks and their ties together with the outcome of it. The novel contains the qualities of black culture not only from the perspective of the protagonist but other characters are also ally important to depict the qualities of black narratives. For e.g. Sixo, he is a slave she was known as wild man. He is known as wild man because, on one hand, he was hack and on the slave man. He is he when tried to escape from the slavery, caught and burnt alive. In this sense too the entire novel is about black narrative.

As part of the black culture, black women represent the pillars of strengths within that community as protectors and healers. They are the glue that holds everything together when the world is falling apart around them. Many of the characters have been torn from their families because of the slave traders splitting up families and selling them as slaves to various white masters. Together, they share a history of suffering and an urge to heal and become whole people again. In isolation, black women formed bonds to survive and empower each other to withstand the atrocities of slavery. There is also a sense of the taken that away during slavery. Beloved is about an awakening to the ability to be individuals again and feel empowered after shaking the ghost of a dehumanizing history.

A sense of community and sisterhood along with the tight bonds of family that cannot be broken even by physical distance are what help Sethe and the black culture overcome the trauma and sorrow of the past.

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