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Racial Identity in “God Help The Child” and “Beloved”

by Toni Morrison

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Abstract:

Morrison's fiction vividly and sensitively depicts the tragedy that befalls the African diaspora. The themes of racism, colour conflict, segregation, injustice, child abuse, and enslavement permeate Morrison's works. Morrison's contributions to the canon of African American literature were crucial in its eventual acceptance in the mainstream of literary discourse around the world. As a result of her work, African American literature was given access to unfamiliar territory and perspectives. Within the context of racism, colourism, blackness, realism, and slavery, this review paper analyses two books by Toni Morrison: “*God Help the Child*” and “*Beloved*.” As much as possible, the helplessness, inhumanity, and miseries experienced by black people are reflected here. Morrison does an excellent job of describing how her characters, such as Sethe in “*Beloved*” and Bride in “*God Help the Child*,” respond differently to the unfairness and inhumanity that is thrust upon them. This article is examining the ordeals of black women and men which have been depicted by Toni Morrison through her fiction.

Keywords: *Racism, Toni Morrison, God Help The Child, Beloved, Discrimination*

1. Introduction:

In the late 18th century, African American literature began to earn distinct monuments in the literary canon of global literature. This trend continued into the 20th century. It is a body of scholarly work that relates to the literature that has been published by people of African descent living in the United States. African American authors used fictitious voices to triumph over prejudice and enslavement. These authors have chosen as the topics of their work the agony, problems, and struggles that are experienced by the Black African people. Some of the topics that are discussed in African American literature are racism, slavery, socioeconomic injustice, colourism, and segregation.

In the West, skin colour is seen as important as race. There are still many places in the world where people are forced to live apart because of their skin colour or their race. Legendary African American author Alice Walker first popularised the term "colourism" in 1982 and used it in her writing. She produced the word to emphasise the value of white or light skin above that of people of colour. In every way, white people were better than black people. When it came to class, race, and colour, white people completely disregarded black people and treated them as second-class citizens (Walker 72).

The African American author Toni Morrison has achieved widespread renown. For her insightful works, she has been honoured with numerous awards and prizes. She already had a lot going for her, but the Nobel Prize in literature was a huge honour. Topics like sexual harassment, enslavement, repression and sexual assault are prevalent in most of her novels.

Morrison aims to reveal black people's overtly exploitative inclinations against white people. The Noble Prize for Literature was awarded to Morrison, the first black woman to do so. She earned the Pulitzer Prize for "*Beloved*" in 1987, and the National Book Critical Award in 1977 for her novel "*Song of Solomon*." The Condorcet Medal, National Humanities Medal, Coretta Scott King Award, and Enoch Pratt Free Library Literary Achievement Award are all presented to her. She received the Noble Prize for Literature in 1933 "*The Bluest Eye*" (1970), "*Sula*" (1973), "*Song of Solomon*" (1977), "*Tar Baby*" (1981),

“*Beloved*” (1987), and “*God Help the Child*” (1988) are all significant works by Morrison.

Abdullah (2015) penned that, Morrison was a victim of racial discrimination, and her ancestors were slaves. Morrison discusses black people and their lives in America via her writings. Morrison's writing is strongly influenced by black cultural history. African Americans have always been ostracised and viewed as second-class citizens. Morrison explores the suffering that comes with being black, the experience of black women from a female writer's perspective, and the uprising against the hegemonies of domesticity, subservience, and nurturing. Morrison uses the patriarchal American society to illustrate what black women go through in America (Abdullah 25).

As affirmed by George (2018), Morrison's work emphasises racial discrimination, its devastating effects, and how African Americans seek to change society through their power, vision, and unwavering will. Morrison's works are based on her observations and experiences from her youth as well as her first-hand experiences in the less affluent segment of African American society. Her books shed light on the deplorable state of her people's suffering and persecution. From her first book, “*The Bluest Eye*,” through her final one, “*God Help the Child*,” Morrison has tried to problematise the difficulties of being a black person in America. As a result, darkness is the primary factor that influences many other novels as well as this one. The main character, who is black, highlights the immense hardship and fight against bigotry. Morrison challenges the way the media portrays her people as being mistreated, marginalised, and dehumanised by giving them a black woman (George 142).

1.1 “*Beloved*”

Toni Morrison has done the most in-depth exploration of racism, colourism, and child maltreatment in the novel “*Beloved*.” Lula Ann, sometimes known as Bride, is a young girl whose life is profoundly affected by racial discrimination. Due to their lighter skin, Ann's parents enjoyed special treatment from the white majority in the United States. They anticipated with curiosity whether their first child would share their skin tone. But with the birth of Ann, their deep-seated desire to have a child with lighter skin was dashed. Ann was born with a darker

skin tone than both of her parents. Their new baby comes as a terrible shock to Sweetness and Louis. Sweetness sees similarities between her child and the black people of Sudan. She makes it plain that she does not share responsibility for her child's race, saying instead that her husband's family is to blame.

Morrison's book *“Beloved”* illustrates how racism and slavery can strengthen white dominance over black slaves. Racism often involves insolent treatment and discrimination, and in Morrison's *“Beloved,”* enslavement is based on "dominance obedience." The dominance-submission paradigm serves as the foundation for the interaction between slave and master. It is obvious that white people exercise "dominance," while black slaves serve as "subjects." Wealthy whites frequently mistreated black slaves. By enslaving them, white people impose their supremacy on black people. Slaves frequently endure slander and harsh, inhumane punishment for their heinous errors. In addition, Morrison highlights in *“Beloved”* the devastating suffering and identity loss caused by white dominance via racism and slavery.

“Beloved,” is a novel about enslaved people, and the best-seller *“Song of Solomon”* followed Morrison's other works as successful literary works. Younger black female writers including Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou (author of *“I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”*), and Alice Walker (author of *“The Colour Purple”*) have been inspired by the works of these authors to explore themes of race and gender identity. Black women understand what it is like to deal with racism and sexism. The Palestinian Arabs have gone to great lengths to emphasise their plight. African women faced double discrimination because of their gender and race.

Sethe, the mother of four kids in *“Beloved,”* is notorious for trying to kill them when she learns that she would have to sell them back into slavery. After twenty-eight days of freedom, Sethe does the only thing she can think of to take charge: she destroys the "property" for which the bounty hunter and slaveowner have come. Sethe *“was not going back there... Any life but that one”* was better than the life she had before (Morrison *“Beloved”* 42).

Readers of *“Beloved”* may comprehend how a mother would choose to kill her children rather than give them a life that is not worth living because maternal

love can be so overwhelming. When Sethe escapes from slavery and arrives with her three older children while still having her newborn baby strapped to her, she is full of maternal love: *“Sethe lay in bed under, around, over, among, but especially with them all”* (93). In contrast to other of Morrison's mother characters (such as Baby Suggs), Sethe savours her motherly affection in both happy and sad circumstances.

Sethe is a mother who, fearing capture (and eventual torture), goes against the conventional norm that mothering should be peaceful. Four white men enter the shed and immediately notice *“two boys bled in the sawdust and . . . a nigger woman holding a blood-soaked child to her chest”* is rocking the infant in the swing *“by the heels . . . toward the wall planks”* (149). Her acts are unspeakably violent, but the readers are left in no doubt as to the sincerity of her mother's love or her ability to wield immense power. *“Because the normative vision of maternity tends to elevate the mother/child relation to an idealized field of ethical action, infanticide is most often read either as an unintelligible aberration from normative kinship or as an act of pure love, in which case it is thought to be completely intelligible”* (Peterson 551).

Although Sethe's acts are horrifying, they are also compelled by her strong dominance—she decides what will happen to her and her children. Peterson contends, *“What Sethe claims to signify not only her daughter but also what she claims for her act of infanticide: namely, that it is an act of pure love”* (555). Sethe takes control of what little she can by re-projecting the violence that has ruled over her for years. Sethe values her children so much that she would rather die than subject them to a torturous life as slaves.

Sethe continues to defend her maternal brutality even after months and years have passed, and she has been threatened with prison and decades of ridicule within her community. As she tells Paul D, *“I did it. I got us all out. . . . I could not let all that go back to where it was, and I could not let her nor any of em live under schoolteacher”* (Morrison, *“Beloved”* 162). Even more revealing are the thoughts that go through Sethe's head when she spots the hat belonging to the slaveowner in the front yard on that fateful day:

“No. No. Nono. Nonono. Simple. She just flew. Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious, fine, and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where no one could hurt them. Over there. Outside this place, where they would be safe” (163).

She chooses a violent death inside the confines of her family because she is unwilling to give up her children's right to freedom, their relationships, or even everyday decision-making (something she hardly ever experienced before her escape). Sethe explains how she slashed her own daughter's throat, *“if I hadn't killed her, she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her”*(200). Slavery, and especially being owned by the horrible Schoolteacher, is death for Sethe; a death of spirit and intellect in addition to the physical body, and a death that is worse than any physical death because it occurs in isolation from loved ones. Sethe realises that it is sometimes preferable to make a wrong decision rather than have no decision at all due to her uncertainty regarding the fate of her mother, the whereabouts of her husband, and the fate of their friends who escaped with them.

Sethe, the mother of four children in *“Beloved,”* is notorious for trying to kill them when she learns that she will be forced to sell them into slavery again. Sethe had been free for twenty-eight days when she decides to take matters into her own hands by destroying the "property" for which the bounty hunter and slaveowner have come. Sethe *“was not going back there... Any life but that one”* was preferable to her former existence (45).

According to Boyce Davies, this book is famous for depicting numerous real-life occurrences. Because of this, this book depicts a wide range of real-life events that severely degraded Africans. For instance, even though Infant Suggs had eight children, she was not allowed to retain any of them. Her eighth child, Halle, was the one who lived with her for a prolonged period. She recalls that her first two children, two small girls, were sold away from her when they were quite young. Even waving her hands in their direction was forbidden. So, in addition to inter- and intra-racial violence, one may also find self-coordinated violence in this scenario.

“*Sethe’s violent action becomes an attempt to hold on to the maternal right and function.*” When independence was attained, Sethe agreed to carry the weight of authority that comes with preserving it at any cost. She behaves rebelliously, being prepared to murder, and die to protect her children and assert her ownership over any claims to property made by the schoolteacher (Boyce Davies 139).

As stated by Moody (1990) that the Black slaves' experience is the primary theme of Morrison's "*Beloved*." Some of the black slaves in "*Beloved*" are named Sethe, Halle, Sixo, Paul D, Paul A, and Paul F. They were treated horribly by the all-white "*Sweet Home*" family members, whom they worked for as slaves. Sethe had planned a little getaway to Cincinnati with her husband before the birth. Sethe was able to get all three of her kids to Cincinnati before she escaped. A white superior in the "*Sweet Home*" family sexually abused Sethe, though. Halle was driven insane by the experience of watching his wife brutally raped in front of his eyes. Sethe was liberated and settled in Cincinnati afterwards. However, the slave hunters who were working for "*Sweet Home*" still haunted her and her family. They tracked Sethe and her family down in Cincinnati with the intent of transporting them back to "*Sweet Home*" to be sold as slaves. Sethe, unwilling to condemn her children to a life of servitude, slayed them. Put simply, death is an escape hatch for slaves (Moody 62).

"*Beloved*" sheds attention on the heart-breaking servitude that African slaves endured in the United States. Morrison conveys the dominance of whites over blacks via the narration of slavery. The foundation of the idea of white control in "*Beloved*" is racism and slavery (63).

In Morrison's "*Beloved*," racism is manifested by the white people through disrespectful behaviour and prejudice toward black people. In the meanwhile, the practice of slavery is conducted by implementing the dominance-submission principle in the master-slave relationship (65).

Thohiriyah (2019) in his article "Solidifying the White Domination through Racism and Slavery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" described the white masters in "*Beloved*" enforce their power on the black slaves by using the convict-lease system as a form of punishment. The way Charles sees it, in the convict-lease

system, “black men were convicted of baseless crimes such as vagrancy or the intent to steal” (2005). The ability of the whites to make the blacks work for enslavement in “*Sweet Home*” reflects their dominance in “*Beloved*.” When black slaves are wrongly accused of something, whether it is a mistake or an invented offence, they will be treated inhumanely. Whites either imprison or execute blacks by hanging them from trees. “*Passed right by those boys hanging in the trees. One had Paul A’s shirt on but not his feet or his head*” (90). By way of illustration, Morrison brings to the attention of his readers, through the character Sixo, the inhumane nature of the racist system that is perpetuated by white people (Thohiriyah 91).

Struglinska (2015), said that the female protagonists' efforts to assimilate into American culture were counterproductive. These events have a significant, negative impact on these characters' life. No one on screen has any real chance of making it through a dangerous circumstance. The two women's ability to successfully portray another person has had a major impact on their ability to make it in real life. It is their actions that set off prejudice against black people in a certain society. The protagonists' efforts to enjoy the performance are mostly motivated by a search. Sula and Jadine try to overcome their psychological victimisation by actively seeking answers. Both Sula and Jadine were given their freedom. As a result, they are still far from doing what they set out to do. They were discontent with their lives and wanted something different. Societal and colonial influences derailed the mission. This is a method of ingesting the societal values that are in charge (Struglinska 220).

As expressed by Andrews (1999) that Sethe, the protagonist of Toni Morrison's “*Beloved*,” killed her daughter because she knew that femininity was a sin during the time of slavery. She was the target of this savage trap. Around the same time, she was being held down by one child as the other child in the group snatched her milk. In addition, the ex-slave Ella was locked in a room for days and subjected to abuse at the hands of the father and the child. Baby Suggs, Sethe’s relative, had to make a deal to ensure that her third child would not be taken from her. Not only that but Sethe’s mother, as well as her shipmates, was regularly snatched up by the group, as Nan had warned her (Andrews 73).

When Sethe kills her daughter, for instance, she is sent to the black zone. She avoids human interaction and hence maintains her solitary existence. The child's ghost, when agitated, will smash the mirror, and leave its impression on the cake. As a result, Sethe's sons, Howard and Buglar, are so frightened that they must leave their home at "124." Again, Sethe and Denver are on their own, without any social support (76).

In this version of events, baby Suggs is a woman who undergoes a profound metamorphosis. Sethe is therefore subjected to a great deal of sexual and bodily assault. More than that, the tale features a few individuals who are opposed to cruelty and suffer unpleasant consequences because of their stance. Paul D, for instance, is a man who has witnessed a great deal of devastation in his lifetime. He witnessed the sale and abandonment of his sister, the hanging and execution of another, the intoxication and subsequent shooting of a friend, the breakdown of yet another, etc. Also, he has seen more African Americans in their graves than he has alive on his travels (78).

1.2 "God Help the Child"

"*God Help the Child*" is a classic of African American literature because it vividly portrays the pain that black people endure because of racism and humiliation at the hands of society. Bride, the protagonist, has a dreadful upbringing since her mother, who is fair-skinned, does not love her. Bride herself is a deep dark colour, and no one in her family is. Her father leaves her and her mother because she is black, and he never touches his daughter, thus she becomes the seed of her parents' shattered life. He had the impression that his daughter is of Sudanese descent. Bride, the protagonist, is abandoned by her white, upper-class parents because they are too ashamed to care for her because of her unusual blue-black skin

"*God Help the Child*" is about a girl who is tortured by her parents because they do not accept her for who she is. Bride's mother, Sweetness, says that her daughter's skin colour is not her fault. Her spouse Louis, on the other hand, suspects that Sweetness is cheating on him. And then, having placed no confidence in his wife, he abandoned them. Even Sweetness's child was regarded as an outsider by her. In other words, she does not show her any affection.

The work written by Morrison dealt with a variety of topics, including racism, brutality, and beauty. A rejection from the people of American culture is viewed as a sign of having a black body. The locals believe that the colour black is a sign of bad luck. The relationship between the parents and children in this book is fascinating. Louis, the father of Bride blames her for sexual infidelity.

Morrison's work draws heavily on his own life and the world around him. She has used her writing to shed light on the plight of black Americans. Morrison reveals the white people's racist attitudes and biases, and he details the black people's long and exhausting fight against these attitudes and behaviours. Morrison offers a fresh perspective on the American experience by reimagining the country's long and difficult quest to reinvent itself. Morrison has introduced a new concept of social justice in her novel *"God Help the Child"* by raising questions about the plight of African American women in the United States.

Her writing is dominated by the themes of loss and the black identity crisis. Ideological racism is deeply ingrained in the minds of many white people and may be difficult to overcome. So, Morrison uses both her 1970 work *"The Bluest Eye"* and her final novel, *"God Help the Child,"* to force readers to this conclusion (2015).

Morrison has portrayed the life of a girl named Lula Bride in the novel *"God help the child."* Her mother Sweetness has been afraid of her since the day she was born. Her mother called her- *"Midnight black, Sudanese black"* (Morrison *"GHC"* 3). Lula Ann is neglected and mistreated by her light-skinned parents because they are embarrassed by the colour of her skin. Sweetness's husband Louis could not adore a child with a dark complexion because of their financial situation. The father of Lula Ann did not accept her and thought of her as an object. *"A Stranger more than that an enemy"* (16). Lula Ann is considered an adversary by Louis, who refuses to hold his daughter and accuses his wife of "infidelity." Sweetness and her spouse are the opposite of the ideal of beauty since neither of them can bring themselves to adore their child. The couple battled over the colour of their daughter's skin until Sweetness suggested that Louis' family, not her own, was the source of the darkness. *"Her colour is cross she will always carry,"* Mother ends with a dreadful lack of nuance, *"But it is not my fault. It is not my fault. It is not my fault. It is not"* (7).

In her attempt to be nice, Sweetness avoided touching her daughter's ebony skin and now she will not even hug her. When Lula Ann was a child, her mother made her call her "Sweetness" instead of "Mother" or "Mama," depriving her of the pleasure of pronouncing the word "Mama" correctly. Sadly, Sweetness neglected her young kid. Lula Ann misses her mother and wants to be cared for by her. Sweetness did not take her baby out because well-meaning strangers and friends alike would reach down and peep in on her, say something pleasant, and then startle or leap, leaving Sweetness with an uncomfortable frown. Growing up, Lula Ann experienced an abundance of emotions, including hunger, humiliation, longing, love, tenderness, and acceptance. Lula Ann runs away, adopts the surname "Bride," and starts donning white clothes to hide her natural dark complexion. Bride finds out, much to her surprise, that black men find her highly attractive, and that being black is now considered "the new black" (12).

Lula Ann is raised in a very patriarchal, dictatorial fashion by her mother, ironically named "Sweetness." The lack of nurturing during Lula Ann's childhood breaks down the mother-daughter bond. During her daughter's formative years, a mother's ability to form strong bonds of emotion and affection with her kid is crucial. Lula Ann's mother, she remembers, hated touching her because of her skin tone. Lula Ann also remembers doing minor things on purpose to make her mother touch her ugly skin. When Lula Ann accidentally stains her bed sheet with menstrual blood and her mother strikes her, she secretly enjoys the attention (14).

Bride and Booker got separated. On her journey to find Booker, she meets a fascinating white child named Rain, who grows fond of her. And the romance between Bride and Booker is a major factor in the novel. Thankfully, she tracks down her swoon-worthy Booker. The novelist dates racism back to the time of Sweetness's mother, who endures hardship while trying to provide for herself and her daughter by working as a slave. The author emphasises racism and prejudice by comparing the two versions of the Bible that were printed for whites and Negroes in her telling of the mother's experience (66).

The white man's bible cannot even be touched by the black. However, all changed by the book's conclusion, when Booker, the white lover, agrees to wed Bride the black girl when she tells him she is pregnant. Bride's goal is to inform

the younger generation about her marriage to Booker and their updated definition of success. Bride's mother, Sweetness, receives a letter from Bride describing the pregnancy, which makes Sweetness recall her daughter's painful growing stages. Finally, her mother says, "God luck and God help the kid," believing that nothing has changed and that nothing will change even when her daughter becomes "a parent" (178). She says,

"It is not my fault. So, you cannot blame me. I did not do it and have no idea how it happened. It did not take more than an hour after they pulled her out from between my legs to realize something was wrong. Wrong. She was so black scared me. Midnight black, Sudanese black, I am light skinned, with good hair, what we call high yellow, and so is Lula Ann's father" (71).

The same thing happens on the inside to Lula's dad, Louis; he becomes incredibly hostile toward his daughter. He views Lula as more than just an adversary. He will not even go as far as to touch her. Because of his extreme revulsion, he decides to end his marriage and separate from Sweetness and Lula permanently. He cruelly made his wife take care of Lula. With a voice of sweetness,

"He was not a cussing man she when he said, Godmann! What is this? I knew we were in trouble. That is what did it. - what caused the fights between me and him. It broke our marriage to pieces. We had three good years together but when she was born, he blamed me and treated Lula Ann like she was a stranger- more than that, an enemy." He never touched her. I never did convince him that I am never, ever fooled around with another man. He was dead sure I was lying. We argued and argued till I told him her blackness must be from his own family- not mine. That is when it gets worse, so he bad he just up and left and I had to look for another, cheaper place to live" (87).

Sweetness, however, is subjected to a lot of limitations because of being Lula. She also does not often touch Lula's body. Sweetness is incredibly ashamed to give birth to a child with a black complexion. She instructs Lula not to refer to

her in public as "mother" or "mama" to preserve her reputation in public. She recommends that Lula refers to her as "Sweetness." Sweetness uses the term "witch" to disparage Lula's looks negatively.

"I told her to call me "sweetness" instead of "mother" or "mama." It was safer. Being that black and having what I think are too-thick lips calling me "mama" would confuse people. Besides, she has funny coloured eyes, crow black with a blue tint, something witchy about them too" (107).

According to Shah (2019), Bride's mother tells her she will be in trouble if she ever refers to her as anything other than Sweetness. When a young child learns that only white people are considered beautiful, it can have a profound effect on his or her self-perception and identity. Her upbringing is traumatic, and she has much more difficulty as an adult in a world where her scars are ignored. Once again, she has been hurt by her lover Booker, who has told her that she is not the kind of woman he wants. She feels completely alone and abandoned. To reconnect with her broken mind, Bride travels to North Carolina, where her boyfriend Booker resides with his aunt Queen Olive (Shah 137).

As asserted by Gay (2015) in his article for *"The Guardian," "God Help the Child"* portrays a girl who is abused by her parents because they do not want to confess that Bride is their daughter. Her mother Sweetness ignores her ebony-black child to gain favour with the community. Bride lacked affection and love growing up. Her parents' love was very lacking during her formative years. She was severely tortured by her mother Sweetness' actions. Gay continues to compose: *"Bride grew up without love, tenderness, affection, or apology. Sweetness makes it clear she saw herself protecting her child from a world that would be even more inclined toward the darkness of her skin. Some of you think it is a sad thing to group ourselves according to skin, colour, the lighter, the better in the social club, neighbourhood, churches, sororities, and even coloured schools. But how else can we hold onto a little dignity?" (Gay 29)*

The challenging situation of a girl who is mistreated and despised just because of her skin colour is illustrated in the book. Her parents do not show her love or affection. Mother Sweetness shares the inner struggles she faces in

the White community. She was obliged to reject her daughter, Bride, to preserve her place in white society; it was not her decision.

According to Mar Gallego (2019) that *“God Help the Child”* chronicles the agony inflicted on African Americans throughout history because of prejudice. To “pass” means to use a false identity to fit in with a group to which one does not belong. Because of the inherent shame associated with being black, people of that race were often forced to conceal their origins. There were many issues that the African people had to deal with, such as sexual abuse, exploitation, and dominance. For black folks, being black led to their greatest hardships. Historically, white people have held a position of power and privilege, while African Americans have been on the receiving end of that power and privilege (Gallego 319).

Kara Walker (2015) in her paper “Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child*” stated that through self-determination and drive, a young woman Lula Bride in her early twenties can become a regional manager at a thriving business and enjoy an interesting and fulfilling professional and personal life. She overcame adversity to become self-sufficient and establish her own identity, earning the nickname “Bride” and the habit of dressing in all white to captivate men. Walker contends *“at the heart of the novel is a woman, who calls herself bride. Young beautiful with the deep blue-black skin and career in a cosmetic company”* (Walker 11). She is the same person that was turned away. *“by her light-skinned mother, Sweetness who has been poisoned by that strain of colour and class anxiety still present in the Black community”* (42). Remembering her birth, Sweetness says, *“It did not take more than an hour after they pulled her out from between my legs to realise something was wrong.”* Her mother was frightened by her baby's extreme darkness at birth (3).

Mecca Jamilah Sullivan (2013), in her article “Toni Morrison’s *God Help the Child*” argued that the narrative reflected the American people's deeply embedded psychology in racism and that the protagonists' desire to flee from such practices was motivated by fear. Morrison uses her novels as a platform to provide those without one a voice and a chance to be heard.

She further added that Morrison's basic theme is explored in "*God Help the Child*," including the consumption of bodies (especially those of black women), the lingering hurt of rejection, and the exquisite glory of desire. Lulla Ann Bridewell, or "Bride" for short, is a young black woman whose life has been impacted by the fact that her body does not conform to the standards of acceptable womanhood. For most of her childhood, her "high yellow" mother Sweetness refuses to touch her because she is a "blue-black" child. Bride's father also escapes without touching her (Sullivan 206).

Ahmed Roz Salahuddin and Sherzad Shafi Babo (2019) in their article "Trauma in Toni Morrison's Novel *God Help the Child*," concluded that the four main characters in novel, Bride, Booker, Brooklyn, and Rain, all go through difficult experiences as children. Bride was harshly treated and neglected by her parents. The murder of Booker's brother has had a profound effect on him. Brooklyn's life has been hampered by a lacklustre dad who ignored the abuse she suffered at the hands of others. Rain can withstand even the harshest of conditions. Her mother puts her up for sale as a child prostitute (Ahmed and Babo 223).

Gol Man Gurung (2021) in his work "Racial Passing in Toni Morrison's *God Help the Child*," discussed the racial discourse of many characters in Morrison's novel. He said that because of their race, the African American population had a tough time of it. Black Africans in the United States have experienced discrimination and prejudice largely because of the country's system of racial oppression. In the novel, Sweetness, Lula's mother was herself daughter of black parents, she benefited from the privilege of having light skin. She was anticipating the birth of a baby of a similar complexion to herself. Lula Ann's 'midnight' black birth colour, however, has always been a source of psychological distress for her. Sweetness interacts with Lula Ann with harsh behaviour. She is ashamed because she gave birth to a baby of colour. She keeps her pregnancy a secret from the public (Gurung 72).

Boyce Davies (1994) in her paper "Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject" discussed that "*Beloved*" simultaneously emphasises that Black women must claim something as their own while criticising exclusive motherlove (Boyce Davies 136).

According to Franklin (2019), Morrison uses the novel *“God Help the Child”* as a rallying cry for her community to acknowledge the divisions caused by racism and colourism. White supremacist ideology is developed by Bride's mother. She uses colour as a lance to gauge a person's worth. A child's parents treat her poorly because of her dark ebony skin tone, even though the youngster is too young to understand the limitations of "beautiful." Neither does she realise that her perpetually gloomy complexion would always be interpreted as a "cross." *“As a bride, you must deal with a lot of outside pressures. Growing up, Bride felt the brunt of the tension between people of dark and light skin. A bride's dark skin prevents her from receiving the typical "maternal" love and care. And so, Bride is subjected to a barrage of racial hatred”* (Franklin 154).

Conclusion

Morrison concludes that her urgency in addressing racial issues and her advocacy for their resolution stems from her desire to acknowledge the unrealised rights of her people. Morrison is one of several writers from African American literature whose work focuses on recording the forgotten or suppressed histories of women, minorities, and enslavement. Therefore, the black American experience is central to Morrison's writings. Morrison shows the painful effects of racial dominance on black women through the eyes of the main characters in her novels. Her works focus on the protagonists' efforts to prove themselves while facing the challenges of persecution based on their colour, race, or gender. *“God Help the Child,”* and *“Beloved”* are Toni Morrison's standard novel about racism that depicts the ongoing struggle of a black child in a modern Western nation through a variety of perspectives and narrative voices.

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