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QUEST FOR SOCIAL FREEDOM IN TONI MORRISON'S NOVEL "BELOVED"

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ABSTRACT

Toni Morrison sets her Novel "Beloved" in the historical site of slavery and records the voices of black people who could not speak through the colonial violence of slavery. It is a post-colonial black identity, delineates a process of self-liberation. It is said in the colonial context of slavery. Sethe, the runaway slave, realizes that getting out of the oppressive reality of slavery does not necessarily mean the achieving of true freedom. Sethe, kills her own daughter in order to avoid slavery and tries to get freedom from the bonds of slavery.

Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* is a collective class struggle against capitalism as the only solution for the African people in the white dominant American society. The novel delineates the most oppressed period of slavery in the history of African people. The novel is based on a newspaper clipping about a fugitive slave in Ohio who killed her own infant rather than to see her in the drastic slavery bondage in South.

Morrison has seen a news clipping in "The Black Book" which portrays the life of the African people in the United States from slavery through the civil rights movement. "Beloved" deals with not only "reconstructed memory" but also deconstructed history. "Beloved" the novel is set in post-civil war Ohio and it tells about the haunting narrative of slavery and its aftermath traces the life of a young woman.

Toni Morrison sets her story in "Beloved" the historical site of slavery and records the voices of black people who could not speak through the colonial violence of slavery. The novel is the theme of post-colonial black identity is most clearly stated when Sethe the runaway slave, realizes that getting out of the oppressive reality of slavery does not necessarily mean the achievement of true freedom. Set in 1873 and 1874, ten years after emancipation, the novel "Beloved" brings back the actual story of Margaret Garner and her murdered child to contemporary reader through the fictional characters of Sethe and her dead daughter Beloved. By depicting the story of a black mother's infanticide with multiple narratives in *Beloved*, Morrison rejects the white master's monolithic definition of the event, make heard the silenced black mother's voice, and examines ideological forces that contributed to the cause of the tragic event.

By rewriting the history of black people, Morrison depicts the post-colonial black identity right in the oppressive colonial space. Through her post-colonial critique of such racial discourses as "Wildness" and "animality" which have been projected on blackness by western colonizers. Morrison finds resistant black identity in the very site where colonial violence occurs. Morrison presents the colonial space as the site of resistance as well as oppression.

Morrison reshapes the assumption that black people have been completely helpless and pathetic victims throughout the history of oppression and re-shapes black slaves as resistant political agents who could fight to claim self-ownership in their oppressive reality. In "Beloved" Morrison explores the slaves' history that has been shameful and traumatic memory for the black people. She attempts to re-examine the mind and behavior of slaves and masters and re-interpret the colonial site of slavery.

In the novel, Sethe's infanticide and her dead daughter "Beloved" dramatizes the painful history of black people who suffered not only from the physical violence of slavery but also from the inability to represent and record their own history. Sethe's psychological and traumatic pain coming from her real life experience that is disconnected from the social context.

The novel opens introducing the spiteful spirit haunting the Bluestone house: 124 was spiteful. Full of baby's venom (Beloved 3) the discloses the readers that Bluestone 124 was the historical place where Sethe's infanticide occurred in her attempt to prevent her children from being taken to the evil practice of slavery. The Bluestone house is shown as the most privatized and isolated place where the angry spirit of Sethe's slain daughter is punishing Sethe for her moral decision. With Paul D's arrival the novel starts to dramatize the process of exorcizing "Beloved" from the Bluestone house.

Paul D manifests his colonized mindset when he uses the same logic in decoding Sethe's act of infanticide. He was told that Sethe killed her daughter to keep her from being taken back to slavery, instead of blaming slavery for its physical and psychological violence on black people, he repeats Schoolteacher's logic by blaming Sethe for being animalistic. Sethe is not free from the political effect of the white master's narrative interrupting/rewriting/colonizing the memory of black people. Sethe's act implies that was the reasonable and desperate strategy of infanticide against the horrifying slave system in which black people are exploited as sexual commodity as well as labour forces for the white masters.

Morrison explores a black woman's self-conscious protest to the dual oppression. It is not only sexual exploitation that Sethe feels most oppressed by, but the humiliation of her nurturing abilities as a mother-the stealing of her milk. The murder of Beloved becomes Sethe's act of mother's love. She prefers to murder her daughter "Beloved" rather than to see her in bondage of slavery. Sethe's experience is treated with many ironic overtones that point to certain paradoxes and many fundamental intricacies of her Quest for freedom. The freedom bring back black people from the heinous act of slavery. It is the self-respect that prevent black people not to be caught in the clutches of white hegemony.

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