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## The portrayal of black women in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, *The Bluest Eye*, and *Song of Solomon*

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#### Abstract

This paper examines the complex themes of racial discrimination, gender injustice, and the intersection of race and gender in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, *The Bluest Eye*, and *Song of Solomon*. The main objective is to explain how Morrison's narratives reveal the combined impact of these social issues on African-American individuals, particularly women. This study uses the theoretical framework of black feminism to understand the multiple layers of oppression that black women face in America. By conducting a comparative analysis of Morrison's works, this study seeks to uncover the vision and mission underlying her literary exploration of these themes. Using black feminism as a guiding theory, it highlights the pervasive nature of racial discrimination and its adverse impact on identity and mental well-being, as depicted in characters such as Sethe and Pecola Breedlove. The analysis delves further into gender injustice, illustrating how Morrison's female characters navigate and resist the patriarchal structures that exacerbate their marginalization. By comparing the characters' experiences in Morrison's novel, this study aims to comprehensively understand the interplay between race and gender in shaping black women's lives and identities.

**Keywords:** *African-American, black feminism, gender inequality, racial discrimination, slavery, Toni Morrison*



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### Public Interest Statement

This paper addresses the complex themes of racial discrimination and gender injustice in Toni Morrison's acclaimed novels *Beloved*, *The Bluest Eye*, and *Song of Solomon*. By examining how these narratives play out, the researcher can reveal the combined impact of these social issues on African-American individuals, particularly women. This research offers valuable insights into the lived experiences of black women in America. Using the lens of black feminism, it highlights the multiple layers of oppression that women face. It can also reveal the profound impact on their identity and mental well-being. Through a comparative analysis of Morrison's works, this paper not only reveals the author's vision and mission in addressing these themes but also underscores the resilience and resistance of female characters against patriarchal structures. This study aims to deepen our understanding of the intersectionality of race and gender, highlighting the relevance of Morrison's work in contemporary discussions on social justice and equality.

### Introduction

Toni Morrison, a legendary figure of American literature, has significantly impacted the literary world with her nuanced portraits of black life in the United States as witnessed by black women. To say that her novels are stories ignores their profound implications on race, gender, and identity. They are strong-willed but oppressed female Africans who have been marginalized and silenced by society, whereas they take pleasure in their innate ability to survive against the odds with others (Nurhayati, 2019; Mudia et al., 2022). The paper aims to establish how Morrison's works, such as *Beloved* (1987), *The Bluest Eye* (1970), and *Song of Solomon* (1977), enhance the experiences of African-American women and serve as a vehicle for their stories about resilience.

Morrison's narratives often focus on Black women rendering their interior lives and outer realities in a society governed by racial and sexual hierarchies (Higinik, Elisabeht and Kumayas, 2023). In *Beloved*, for instance, slavery is portrayed as haunting its victims through one specific character, Sethe. Her experience represents the collective trauma endured by African American women. *The Bluest Eye* mainly highlights how young Pecola Breedlove is conditioned into self-hatred based on beauty standards grounded in racism prevailing within society. These novels highlight black women's specific challenges and criticize the broader cultural forces that shape their lives (Wajiran and Septiani, 2023).

Morrison's narrative style is deeply rooted in the oral tradition of African American culture, giving perspective to character voices (Andrews, 1996). Using fractured narratives, multiple angles of vision, and lush fugue-like prose, she brings home the experiences of these characters in a gut-deep way. This approach to narration adds more realism to the story and helps demonstrate how individual histories are interwoven with communal ones. Through this way of writing novels, Morrison ensures that black African women's voices are not silent (Hopkins, 1992; Rasheed and Salahuddin, 2021). It appears it forces readers out of their comfort zones by making them face truths about race and gender in America.

Morrison's portrayal of women in her work, is multifaceted when considering intersectionality. This concept underscores how race, class, and gender intersect. In *Song of Solomon* characters like Pilate exemplify the struggles faced by women in a society that attempts to silence and oppress them. However, Morrison emphasizes that these women are not victims but active members shaping their destinies and communities, showcasing their agency and resilience. This analysis will explore how Morrison's depiction of these characters contributes to a perspective on women's identities in America and enhances our comprehension of American literature (Gqibitole and Bello, 2018, 2020). Many studies of Toni Morrison's work have been partial. The researchers mainly focus on one of Morrison's novels using various approaches. Nevertheless, in this study, the researchers want to examine three novels by Morrison. They intend to compare each of these works related to the themes raised. That way, the researcher can find a more comprehensive picture of what Morrison expects in the work she has produced.

### Research method

This research focuses on novels as the primary source of information. The three novels that are the subject of the study are *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Song of Solomon* (1977), and *Beloved* (1987). These novels have received quite a lot of attention in various circles, especially researchers of African-American literature. In addition, these novels are also more appropriate as research subjects because the themes raised are very relevant to the conditions of black people who get unpleasant treatment due to the supremacy of white people. Based on the research results, the novels are also close as a depiction of the life experiences experienced by the author.

The research was conducted by reading the novels individually and taking the core themes related to the discrimination against black people in America. Three critical issues are the concern of this research, namely racial discrimination, gender inequality, and the intersection of race and gender. These three themes are very clearly depicted in the three novels. Although each novel has its focus, the three topics are reflected in the novels. Because this research focuses on these three major themes, each story is not presented in detail; it only discusses each case that fits the topic of this research.

The novels that are the subject of this paper were published between the 1970s and the 1980s. The time of writing is significant in understanding the issues raised by the novelists. That is why, from this time, researchers have also conducted literature studies on the history of important events related to black people in America. This information is essential in presenting the social facts behind the ideas presented by the author in the literary work. Although society has progressed rapidly in various fields, the issue of racism still occurs frequently in America even today. We still remember the recent death of George Floyd, who was strangled by a Minneapolis police officer (Wajiran and Septiani, 2023) *Beloved* dealing with the issues of human discrimination in the United States. Morrison is a writer who voices human values through discussions on issues of discrimination due to ethnicity, race, and skin color, especially that conducted against black people. She was instrumental in fighting for civil and political rights for black people in the United States, especially in Ohio. This study involves the theory of genetic structuralism to understand the concept of white supremacy. This is intended to see the relationship between white supremacy with the issues of social discrimination in the context of black people in the United States depicted in the novel. The issue of race and social class has always stood out in various groups of people. Even though society has progressed the issues of race, religion, and skin color still cause intergroup conflicts due to various interests. As depicted in the novel, black people are generally side-lined and considered only half human. Consequently, black citizens in the United States are associated with slavery or manual labor.

### Theoretical Framework

To understand the values implied in Toni Morrison's novels, the analysis in this paper uses the theory of black feminism. Black feminism is a theoretical framework and social movement that addresses the unique intersection of race, gender, and class oppression black women face (Crenshaw, 2013). Emerging from the civil rights and feminism movements, Black feminism critiques the limitations of mainstream feminist theories that often ignore or marginalize the experiences of women of colour (Williams, 2022). Black feminism also challenged the male-focused discourse in civil rights activism that ignored the gendered aspects of racial oppression. Black feminism seeks to empower Black women by recognizing their struggles and contributions and advocating for a more inclusive and intersectional approach to social justice (Hunter and Sellers, 1998).

Central to Black feminism is intersectionality, a term frequently used by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Intersectionality describes how different forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and classism, are interconnected and cannot be examined in isolation (Crenshaw, 1989). This theoretical approach recognizes that Black women experience unique forms of oppression that are different from those faced by White women or Black men (Billups et al., 2022). Foundational texts such as Bell Hooks' *Ain't I a Woman?* and Patricia Hill Collins's *Black Feminist Thought* emphasizes the importance of examining overlapping social

identities and associated systems of oppression and discrimination. These works argue that Black women's lived experiences and perspectives are critical to comprehensively understanding societal power dynamics. Black feminism has significantly contributed to feminist theory and social activism by highlighting the need for inclusive and cross-border approaches. The Combahee River Collective Statement is an important document that articulates the goals and principles of black feminism, emphasizing the need for solidarity among marginalized groups (Combahee River Collective, 1978). Black feminist theorists and activists have influenced the broader feminist movement to consider the diverse experiences of all women, promoting policies and practices that meet the needs of women of colour (Sheehy and Nayak, 2020). Black feminism's cultural and intellectual contributions extend beyond academia. By amplifying the voices and stories of Black women, it influences literature, art, and popular culture. By challenging dominant narratives and advocating for systemic change, Black feminism continues to play an essential role in the ongoing struggle for equality and justice.

### Discussion

In the discussion section, the researcher divides into three main topics: racial discrimination, gender injustice, and the separation of race and gender. These three issues are the main themes in Toni Morrison's novels, although each work has different emphases. The analysis is done by determining the main topic by comparing each of Morrison's works. This comparison is essential because, with this comparison, we will find the vision and mission that the author is building. With the theory of black feminism, we understand how injustice happens to black people and black women living in America.

### Racial discrimination

Discrimination against black people is no secret. That is because discrimination against black people has been going on for a long time, and many figures have fought to eliminate discrimination against race, ethnicity, and identity, including against black people. Racial, ethnic, and identity discrimination has a devastating impact on black women. Not only are they discriminated against because of their skin colour, but they are also discriminated against because of their gender as women (Wajiran and Septiani, 2023). *Beloved* dealing with the issues of human discrimination in the United States. Morrison is a writer who voices human values through discussions on issues of discrimination due to ethnicity, race, and skin color, especially that conducted against black people. She was instrumental in fighting for civil and political rights for black people in the United States, especially in Ohio. This study involves the theory of genetic structuralism to understand the concept of white supremacy. This is intended to see the relationship between white supremacy with the issues of social discrimination in the context of black people in the United States depicted in the novel. The issue of race and social class has always stood out in various groups of people. Even though society has progressed the issues of race, religion, and skin color still cause intergroup conflicts due to various interests. As depicted in the novel, black people are generally side-lined and considered only half human. Consequently, black citizens in the United States are associated with slavery or manual labor. Women, even with the same skin colour, race, and ethnicity, still receive unfair treatment. That is why it is essential to analyse Morrison's works to illustrate how she presents her female characters in the works she writes.

Toni Morrison sharply examines racial discrimination through the horrific experiences of Sethe and her community (Herminingrum, 2010). The event occurs in a novel called *Beloved*, during the civil war. The novel explores the mental and emotional injuries of the slavery system while emphasizing racial oppression as a permanent problem in society. She is reminded of her existence by Sethe's painful memories of when she was subjected to brutality and dehumanization at Sweet Home, which represents racism within the paradigm of her life. The presence of those haunting lovers can be seen as one that brings back what happened before and refuses to let go. Additionally, this novel shows how enslaved peoples' past keeps haunting them even after slavery has ended.

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Sethe, the character in the novel *Beloved*, symbolizes the enduring impact of slavery and widespread racial prejudice. Her portrayal delves into the effects of racism on personal identity and mental well-being. By examining Sethe's encounters with bias, one gains insight into her decisions, behaviours, and the book's overarching story.

Morrison also explores community dynamics. She describes how racial discrimination fosters solidarity and division among black people. Characters like Paul D and Baby Suggs navigate a world where their value is constantly undermined by white supremacy. It drives black people to seek solace and strength in a shared heritage. The novel *Beloved* delves into the lasting impact of discrimination. Its imagery and emotional depth highlight the strength and resilience of those affected by its harsh realities. *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison's novel, explores how racial discrimination affects the psyche of American individuals. The story centres on Pecola Breedlove, a young African-American girl obsessed with blue eyes, which she believes will make her beautiful and accepted by white society. The impact of the discrimination makes the main character experience identity loss, or what is referred to as internalized self-hatred, where the main character, Pecola, and her family experience intense self-hatred due to dominant white beauty standards. Pecola believes that blue eyes will bring her happiness and acceptance. This depiction shows the intense social pressure to conform to white standards.

A further impact is structural and institutional violence. The novel also explores how society, schools, and work environments discriminate against the Breedlove family, creating a cycle of poverty and social alienation.

“...It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes, those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sights—if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she would be different. Her teeth were good, and at least her nose was not big and flat like some of those thought so cute. If she looked different and beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove would be too. Maybe they'd say, “Why, look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes.” (Morrison, 1970)

Morrison describes how these ideals of beauty are not imposed by society but internalized within society itself. This internalization results in self-loathing and an existential crisis for Pecola. Various characters, such as Pecola's mother, Pauline, and classmates, such as Maureen Peal, respond to this pressure differently. Some adapt to the pressure, while others resist it.

Through Pecola's journey, Morrison critiques how racism and skin colour perpetuate cycles of oppression and psychological harm, revealing the profound effects on individual self-worth and communal unity. The novel's narrative structure incorporates perspectives and temporal shifts to underscore the enduring trauma stemming from racial prejudice—a poignant exploration of race, identity, and cultural norms, as portrayed by Gomes (2016).

“What do you suppose white people would think of you if they knew you were so willing to kill other black people? Do you think they'd admire you, respect you, and pay you for it? Hell, no. They'd figure you were weak, spineless. So in love with their white asses, you couldn't wait to do their work for them.” (Morrison, 1977)

The line does not directly reflect Guitar's understanding of how internalized racism and violence within the black community are perceived and exploited by white society. Instead, the quote illustrates how Guitar's monolithic and unsympathetic attitude towards white people is a form of race-based prejudice. Guitar's perspective is portrayed as a retaliatory hatred towards all white people, which is seen as a destructive response to the racism he faces.

Meanwhile, in *Song of Solomon*, Toni Morrison intricately elaborates on the theme of racial



discrimination through the journey of the main character, Milkman Dead. The setting and themes in this novel illustrate the broader experience of African Americans. Set against the Civil Rights Movement backdrop, the novel investigates the historical and systemic racism that shaped the characters' identities and fates. Morrison examines how racial discrimination manifests not only through overt violence and segregation but also through internalized self-hatred and fractured family histories.

Characters like Guitar Bains, who joins the militant group Seven Days in response to racial injustice, and Macon Dead, who pursues material success as a way to escape racial deprivation, show different reactions to the rampant racism in their society (Rosenblatt, C., 2014). Milkman's search for identity and self-discovery leads him to uncover his family's hidden past, revealing the deep-rooted connection between personal history and racial oppression. The novel also highlights the African-American community's spiritual resilience and cultural richness, as seen through the folklore and oral traditions that guide Milkman's journey (Hopkins, 1992). Through its complex narrative and rich characters, *Song of Solomon* powerfully critiques the ongoing impact of racial discrimination while celebrating the strength and resilience of black identity and heritage.

### Gender Inequality

Toni Morrison's novels each explore the complicated and pervasive nature of gender inequality. Through profoundly personal and intergenerational stories, Morrison illustrates how societal expectations and patriarchal structures shape the lives of her characters, especially women. While each novel differs in its narrative and thematic focus, they collectively reveal the resilience and complexity of black women in navigating a world that often marginalizes and oppresses them.

In *Beloved*, gender inequality is closely linked to the horrors of slavery. Sethe, the protagonist, embodies the double burden of being black and a woman in a society that devalues both identities. Her struggle to protect her children from the dehumanizing effects of slavery leads her to commit acts of profound despair. The novel explores the psychological and emotional impact that gender violence has on Sethe, who lacks autonomy over her body and life. In addition, Morrison also depicts the strained relationships between female characters such as Sethe, Baby Suggs, and Denver, highlighting how systemic oppression disrupts familial bonds and female solidarity.

The novel also clearly depicts the issue of gender discrimination that occurs in the main character, Sethe. Sethe's life vividly portrays the harsh reality of gender inequality associated with racial oppression. As the novel's protagonist, Sethe's journey provides a deep insight into black women's struggles in a patriarchal and racist society. Her life story encapsulates how gender inequality impacts identity, relationships, and survival strategies.

The backdrop of Sethe's experience as a slave girl in Sweet Home highlights the unique gendered dimensions of slavery. While all enslaved people were dehumanized, Sethe faced specific forms of exploitation and violence because of her gender. She is subjected to sexual violence and reproductive control, which is symbolic of the broader systemic use of black female bodies for labour and reproduction. The abuses Sethe endures under her schoolteacher and nephews underscore the brutality of gender-based slavery, in which black women are reduced to their physicality and lack autonomy over their bodies.

Sethe's role as a mother is central to her identity and actions throughout the novel. Her harsh protection of her children, especially her decision to kill her beloved daughter in order to save her from slavery, underscores the extremes she feels as a mother under duress. These actions, while born out of desperation and love, also reflect the limited options available to her in a society that provided little protection or support for black women. Sethe's motherhood is a source of tremendous strength and vulnerability, highlighting how gender roles are intensified under oppressive conditions.

*Song of Solomon* explores gender inequality through dynamics within the Dead family and models the broader African-American community. Female characters such as Pilate, Ruth, and Hagar each face limitations imposed on them by their race and gender. Pilate, in particular, stands out as a symbol of defiance

against patriarchal norms. He is portrayed as living independently and rejecting societal expectations. In contrast, Ruth's life is portrayed as obedience to her husband and longing for affection. It reflects the traditional roles assigned to women. Hagar's obsessive love for Milkman and the emotional devastation she experiences highlights the destructive consequences of societal and familial pressures on women's identity and aspirations.

Pilate stands out as a character who explicitly rejects the traditional gender roles imposed by a patriarchal society. Unlike other women in the novel who conform to societal expectations, Pilate leads an independent and self-sufficient life. She is introduced as a woman without a belly button, symbolizing her non-attachment to conventional femininity and societal norms of womanhood. Pilate's rejection of marriage and her decision to raise her daughter and granddaughter alone further emphasized her independence. By living on his terms, Pilate challenged the gendered expectations of her community and asserted her right to determine her identity.

Economic empowerment is an essential aspect of Pilate's resistance to gender inequality. In a society where women often depend on men for financial stability, Pilate's ability to support herself and her family through winemaking sets her apart. This independence not only allowed her to live free from male control but also allowed her to provide for her family in a way that defied traditional gender roles. Pilate's economic independence is a testament to her strength and resilience, showing how breaking away from patriarchal structures can empower women.

Pilate's character symbolizes female empowerment in *Song of Solomon*. Her life story and actions critique the limitations caused by gender inequality and present an alternative model of womanhood rooted in self-determination and strength. Pilate's influence extends beyond her immediate family, impacting the wider community and the readers. Her legacy in this novel underscores the importance of challenging and redefining traditional gender roles to achieve true empowerment and equality.

The intersection of race and gender

During the Reconstruction period after the end of the Civil War, African Americans loudly demanded the right to vote and protested segregation in areas such as public transportation and education (Gomes, 2016; Rasheed and Salahuddin, 2021). Nonetheless, large numbers of whites, especially in the South, engaged in acts of racial violence against blacks, and feelings of war weariness kept many national political leaders from advocating for the rights of African Americans. Fearing that they would lose votes and support, there were protests everywhere. This led to the consolidation of segregation, which was passed by the Supreme Court in the Plessy v. Ferguson case (1896), which stated that blacks would have "separate but equal" facilities (Gomes, 2016).

Toni Morrison's novels *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Beloved* offer profound insights into the intersection of race and gender. Each novel uniquely explores how these two forms of identity and oppression interact. The novels also depict the lives and experiences of African-American women and men. Morrison's narrative highlights the challenges faced by the characters in the novels. The characters receive unfair treatment as they are portrayed as marginalized. Through their stories, Morrison critiques societal structures that perpetuate inequality and emphasizes the resilience and agency of black individuals, especially women, in the face of such adversity (Ogene, 1966).

"I kissed her neck. I didn't choke it. The circle of iron choked it." (Morrison, 1987)

In *Beloved*, the intersection of race and gender is clearly depicted through the experiences of Sethe and other characters who experience the brutal reality of slavery. Sethe's identity as a black woman makes her experience extreme dehumanization, sexual violence, and exploitation as a mother. The novel emphasizes how the institution of slavery explicitly targets black women, reducing them to property and breeding tools. Sethe's desperate actions to protect her children from these horrors reveal the intense maternal suffering caused by racial and gender oppression. Morrison also examines solidarity and support among black

women, such as the presence of Baby Suggs, who provides spiritual and emotional guidance. Morrison also highlights the strength and resilience needed to survive under oppressive conditions.

Meanwhile, in *Song of Solomon*, the intersection of race and gender is explored through the lives of Matthew's family and their community. The novel depicts how black women, such as Pilate and Ruth, navigate a patriarchal society that demeans them because of race and gender. Pilate's resistance to traditional gender roles and his independence are in stark contrast to Ruth, who is submissive and longs for validation from men. Hagar's character further illustrates the destructive impact of this intersecting oppression, as her unrequited love for Milkman leads to her emotional and mental breakdown. Morrison also illustrates how black men, like Guitar and Milkman, are shaped by the same social forces, dealing with their forms of racial and gender expectations, and how their interactions with black women are affected by these dynamics.

The character of Pilate Dead defies racial and gender norms, illustrating the different kinds of oppression faced by Black women. Her existence challenges the societal expectations placed upon her because of her race and gender. Pilate lives independently, rejecting the conventional roles of wife and mother that are usually expected of women. Her rejection of these roles was a personal choice and a radical resistance against a society that sought to define and confine her. Her independence and strength made her an outlier in a society that often adhered to more traditional roles, thus placing her at the intersection of racial and gender oppression.

Pilate's marginalization is compounded by her race and gender, making her an outcast in his community. She faced suspicion and contempt not only because she was a strong and independent woman but also because she was a black woman who did not conform to societal expectations. This double marginalization reflects the concept of intersectionality, where different forms of oppression intersect to create a disadvantageous experience. However, Pilate's response to this marginalization is one of resilience and inner strength. She maintained a strong sense of identity and purpose, serving as a moral and spiritual guide to others, especially her nephew Milkman. Her ability to remain true to herself in the face of conflicting oppressions underscores the strength and resilience of black women.

Morrison's way of portraying injustice is through the contrasting lives of white and black people. In addition, the way the characters interact depicts striking discrimination where white people are described as full of luxury and enjoyment of life. It is also what makes black people aspire to be like white people in many ways, including lifestyle, sometimes even wanting physical changes that are impossible for them.

“Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs, the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured. “Here,” they said, “this is beautiful, and if you are on this day ‘worthy,’ you may have it.” (Morrison, 1970, p. 20).

The description above shows the dissatisfaction of black people with their own lives. They want to have the body shape or beauty that white people have. It is not possible for them. In *The Bluest Eyes*, Morrison wants to make black people aware that they must be themselves. Black people must be themselves and strive for aspects that they can change. One of these aspects is the issue of economic independence. If black people can succeed in the economic field, they can improve their lives without losing their own identity as black people (Gomes, 2016; Martinez, 2022).

Toni Morrison explores the intersection of race and gender by revealing the complex and multifaceted nature of interrelated forms of oppression. Each novel presents a unique narrative highlighting black women and men's challenges. She emphasizes the pervasive impact of societal standards and expectations. The characters in her work demonstrate resilience and agency. They are often finding strength and solidarity in their communities. They navigate hardships compounded because of their identities. By diving into these themes, Morrison criticizes the structures that perpetuate inequality and celebrates the enduring spirit of black individuals to resist and overcome such adversity.

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The intersection of race and gender in Toni Morrison's novels, particularly in *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Beloved*, is an important theme that highlights the complex and interconnected nature of forms of oppression. Some key points about race and gender in these novels include: First, Morrison's works often explore the intersection of race and gender. They emphasize how these categories interact with and affect black women's experiences. For example, in *The Bluest Eye*, the character Pecola Breedlove faces discrimination due to race and gender. The characterization highlights how these forms of oppression intersect and compound each other's effects. The protagonist Pecola experiences both racial and gender discrimination, which contributes to her feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. This intersectionality is a central theme in Morrison's works, emphasizing the need to consider race and gender in understanding black women's experiences.

Secondly, Morrison's novels also explore how internalized oppression can result from the intersection of race and gender. For example, Pecola's desire to have blue eyes is a manifestation of internalized racism and sexism. This internalized oppression is often a significant theme of Morrison's work, highlighting how individuals can be affected by the dominant narratives and stereotypes around them.

Thirdly, Morrison also illustrates how black women can resist. For example, in *Beloved*, Sethe's experience is characterized by her resistance to the trauma and oppression she faced during slavery. This resistance is Morrison's attempt to emphasize the importance of agency and empowerment in overcoming the intersection of race and gender oppression. Morrison often uses intersectional analysis to examine how race and gender intersect and influence black women's experiences. This intersectional analysis is a key methodological approach in Morrison's work, highlighting the need to consider race and gender in understanding black women's experiences.

Overall, the intersection of race and gender in Toni Morrison's novels is a complex and multifaceted theme. Morrison highlights how these forms of oppression interact with and affect black women's experiences.

## Conclusion

Toni Morrison's works, *Song of Solomon*, *The Bluest Eye*, and *Beloved* offer deep and multifaceted explorations of racial discrimination, gender inequality, and the intersection of race and gender. Each novel provides a unique narrative that reveals the complexity of the African-American experience. They highlight the pervasive impact of systemic oppression and the resilience of black individuals, especially women, in the face of such discrimination challenges.

*Song of Solomon* illustrates the intersection of race and gender through characters like Pilate Dead, who defy societal norms and embody strength and independence. Pilate's life challenges racial and gender expectations, demonstrating the combined effects of intersecting oppressions. Her cultural anchor role and economic independence highlight how Black women navigate and resist oppressive structures. It offers a powerful critique of the social norms that seek to limit them.

*The Bluest Eye* is a sharp critique of internalized racism and the destructive impact of society's beauty standards on black girls. Through the tragic story of Pecola Breedlove, Morrison illustrates how racial discrimination and gender inequality combine to destroy individual self-esteem and identity. The novel emphasizes the harmful impact of these intersecting oppressions on the most vulnerable members of society. It also demonstrates the need for a deeper understanding and dismantling of the pervasive norms of such discriminatory acts.

*Beloved* explores the lingering trauma of slavery and its impact on the lives of black women. Sethe's experience underscores the brutal reality of racial discrimination and gender-based violence. Her desperate actions to save her child from the horrors of slavery reflect the extreme measures historically taken by black women to protect their families. The novel also highlights the importance of communal support and intergenerational transmission of trauma, emphasizing the need for collective healing and solidarity in overcoming the legacy of racial and gender oppression.

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Across the three novels, Morrison not only depicts the deep suffering caused by racial discrimination and gender inequality but also calls for black women's resilience and agency. Her characters navigate a world that seeks to marginalize and silence them, yet they remain steadfast in asserting their identities and reclaiming their narratives. Morrison's work underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing the intersectionality of race and gender, offering robust evidence of the enduring struggle for equality and justice.

Through her storytelling skills and deep empathy for her characters, Toni Morrison makes an invaluable contribution to our understanding of the complexities of race and gender in America. Her novels critique systemic oppression and celebrate the strength and resilience of black individuals, especially women, in their relentless pursuit of dignity and freedom.

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