

The Representation of African American Women in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Magdalena Struglińska

Faculty of Humanistic, University of Humanities and Economics in Lodz,
26 Sterlinga Street, 90-212 Lodz, Poland

E-mail address: magda-82-04@o2.pl

ABSTRACT

African American women are merely half of the Black race, and they are half of the African American history, as well. The main objective of this paper is to show how the institution of slavery influenced lives of African American women and how they are conceived by the American society. This paper is in part an attempt to address the problems of race and gender faced by African American women during the Reconstruction and Civil Rights Movement, by suggesting how those problems shifted over the course of two centuries.

Keywords: African American women, African American history, institution of slavery, Civil Rights Movement

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

1. Slavery and the road to freedom
 - 1.1. The beginning of a Slave Trade
 - 1.2. Slave culture and religion
 - 1.3. American Revolution and its meaning to the slave population
 - 1.4. Struggle for freedom
 - 1.5. Underground Railroad
 - 1.6. Civil War and emancipation
2. From a Black slave-woman to a Black free American
 - 2.1. Female slave labor
 - 2.2. Courtship and marriage in bondage
 - 2.3. Black women and child rearing
 - 2.4. Black women in the Civil Rights Movement
3. The stories written by sweat and blood
 - 3.1. The short introduction of the authors
 - 3.1.1. Alice Walker
 - 3.1.2. Toni Morrison
 - 3.2. Creation of the world presented in the novels
 - 3.3. Motherhood and family image
 - 3.4. Rape archetypes
 - 3.5. Searching for own identity

Conclusions

References

INTRODUCTION

African Americans are the second largest racial group after whites in the United States of America. Their turbulent history was significantly shaped by lasting nearly two hundred and fifty years slavery. Collins O. Airhihenbuwa and Gary King explain the term of black Americans:

“The use of the taxonomic category African American, either in public or health or other disciplines, fundamentally reflects the historic and contemporary systems of racial stratification in American society. The term ‘African American,’ as a categorical descriptor, includes many different segments of the American population referred to as ‘black’ or Americans of sub-Saharan African ancestry. It is also a product of the group self-definition process in which African Americans have historically engaged as an expression of identity, power, defiance, pride, and the struggle for human rights. These designations were often in contradistinction to official government classifications and popular characterizations, which frequently reflected prevailing ideas about white supremacy intended to denigrate African Americans.”¹

This definition reflects rather to black Americans’ history, cultural and ethno geographic roots than to skin pigmentation. It also reveals checkered and colorful history, shaped largely by white supremacy.

The work is divided into three parts. The first chapter shows reasons and history of slavery in the Northern America. Contrary to a popular belief, slavery was not only an institution which improved life of the first settlers, but also developed and strengthened American economy. Chapter one describes beginnings of the slavery trade and reasons of the slavery system since its beginning. It illustrates poor and sever conditions persisting on plantations for such a long time and affecting so many people of African descent.

Chapter two focuses not only on female slave labor, but also describes hard life on plantations of African American women. What is more, it considers how profoundly slavery influenced their families, children, husbands or even sexual life and how this institution influenced their own lives. It also examines the engagement and methods of struggling for their rights and freedom.

Chapter three discusses how two notable African American women writers, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison, present the situation and opportunities of African American women on the basis of their two novels: *The Color Purple* and *Beloved*. In both novels, Black women have to struggle with violence and abuse provided by both: Black and White males. Those women characters attempt to put behind their traumatic experiences from the past and find their inner strength.

The last chapter provides also information about the events of the Alice Walker and Toni Morrison’s lives which were influencing them in many ways. Understanding of the background and certain circumstances in their lives helps to situate the novels in the right place of the whole picture. Their childhood spend on witnessing the segregation, racial injustice and some terrible examples of the whites’ hatred towards the blacks cannot pass without affecting their adult lives

¹ Airhihenbuwa Collins, King Gary, *African Americans*, <<http://www.enotes.com/public-health-encyclopedia/african-americans>>, (5 April 2010).

and their literary works which in many ways are reflecting whatever they have seen and experienced as children.

CHAPTER I

1. Slavery and the road to freedom

“No one knew slavery better than the slave, and a few had thought harder about what freedom could mean.”

Ira Berlin²

1.1. The Beginnings of a Slave Trade

Thinking about America, people usually imagine a land with plenty of opportunities. It was, and still is believed, that this is a place, where immigrants were able to escape from religious or political prosecutions and feel totally free. People who approach a shore of the United States, usually want to achieve success beyond their wildest dreams. However, the feelings of the first Africans, who were brought to America, were completely different.

It is even hard to imagine a set of tragic circumstances that forced slaves to arrive to America. They were captured from their homelands or sold and bound in chains. They usually had to walk a long distance, chained to others like animals. Then, they were forced onto a ship, and put in a lower deck. They were enforced to spend two months in such a horrible and dark prison, cramped, and fed with limited portions of food and water. When captured Africans finally reached the shore and saw the daylight, unfortunately it was not the end of their frightfulness. They were brought onto an auction and sold to their owner. For them, America did not seem to be *the promised land*.

Slavery was an outrageous and reprehensible part of the history of the United States. It was not only a practice that allowed the Blacks to be considered less than a thing, but also a system in which African Americans did not have any opportunities for a normal life. They were kept in horrible and inhumane conditions, forced to arduous and debilitating work for food and a poverty-stricken accommodation. It should be also added, that slavery was not only legal but also accepted by church and society.³ More importantly, slavery was one of the principal issues leading to the American Civil War. Thus, what circumstances caused a flourish of the slavery trade in Northern America and how did it start?

Many historians claim that slavery in the North America commenced at the mouth of James River – in Jamestown, in 1619. The first bound and exhausted black laborers were brought on a ship to the English colony. Nell Irvin Painter called them “African Americans founding generation,”⁴ because they were the first ones, whose arrival to the North America was recorded. However, they were not the first Africans in the American continent. A profusion of slaves were transported from the African coast into Spanish colonies during the mid-sixteenth century.⁵ According to Kelly and Lewis, at time, the Spaniards were making an effort

² Donovan Kenneth, *DaCosta 400. Slaves in Cape Breton 1713-1815*, <<http://www.dacosta400.ca/cavalcade/slaverycb.shtml>>, (17 May 2010).

³ Buell Tonya, *Slavery In America: A Primary Sources History of the Intolerable Practice of Slavery*, New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., 2004. p. 4-6.

⁴ Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and its Meanings, 1619 to the Present*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. p. 21.

⁵ Horton James, *Landmarks of African American History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.p. 14.

to establish their new colonies on the basis of forced labor of the native Americans. However, enslaved Indians had barely managed to perform exhausting work in the fields, households or mines. What is more, Europeans had brought many diseases, which Indians were not resistant on. Thus, Spanish colonists confronted with insufficiency of labor, commenced to introduce African slavery, which was very popular in Spanish society in the 15th century.⁶ Those slaves were not only workers, but also served as soldiers and sailors in the Spanish military forces.⁷

The sea journey with slave cargos was known as the *Middle Passage*. Its name arose from the “second, or middle, segment of a European-based slave ship’s triangular route.”⁸

First, ships had sailed along the coast, from Europe to Africa. There, some consumer goods such as pots and pans, alcohol, guns or clothes were exchanged for slaves. Some historians claim, that Africans were selling their own people, however Robin Kelley and Earl Lewis pointed to the fact, that the sold people were prisoners of the war from the other tribes, or those, who committed crimes. Some Africans were not sold to the traders, but captured and taken on board by force. Such practices, very common especially at the beginning of slave trade, were implemented by the Portuguese sailors, however, that was prohibited by the Portuguese government in the sixteenth century.⁹ Next, the ships with slaves had to traverse a great distance from Africa to America. However, for many reasons, not many Africans finally reached the American shore. Some of them succumbed to many illnesses, or just to exhaustion. Conditions on a board were unhygienic, it was a perfect environment for the spread of many diseases. What is more, some of the slaves were already infected before entering on a board, because they were first kept in a slave-trading centers. Additionally, the death rate depended crucially on a time period of the journey across the Atlantic ocean. Kelly and Lewis estimate, that in the sixteenth century, ships were carrying a cargo for approximately twelve to twenty weeks, however, with a development of a ship constructions, such a journey across the Atlantic has been shortened to five or eight weeks in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.¹⁰ Nell Irvin Painter describes the conditions on board:

“Ships were chronically overcrowded, for shippers usually allotted only six to seven square feet of space per person. Decks swam in urine, feces, vomit, and menstrual and fecal blood. Once or twice a day the captives were supplied with scanty rations. Severe overcrowding fostered disease, most commonly dysentery, typhoid, measles, small pox, yellow fever, and malaria. Undernourishment and dehydration also bred disease. Dehydration posed a particularly graved problem: fresh water was always in short supply at sea, and the lack of water aggravated the heat of overcrowding and the presence of disease, diarrhea, and vomiting. Women and girls were subject to sexual assault from the ship’s crew, aggravating the physical and psychological trauma of the voyage.”¹¹

The conditions were inhuman and inevitably caused many psychical problems, such as for example depression. None of the historians concentrated on psychical aspects and consequences of those tragic journeys.

⁶ Robin Kelly, Lewis Earl, *To Make our World Anew. A History of African Americans to 1880*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. p. 7-8.

⁷ Horton, *Landmarks of African American History*. p.5.

⁸ Kelley, Lewis, *To Make our Word Anew*. p. 9.

⁹ Kelley, Lewis, *To Make our Word Anew*. p. 10.

¹⁰ Kelley, Lewis. *To Make our Word Anew*. p. 9-16.

¹¹ Painter, *Creating Black Americans*. p. 33.

Charleston in South Carolina was the central port for slave ships in the North America. Between 1700 and 1775, 40 percent of Africans were brought to this city before they finally reached the plantations. Before slaves were allowed to enter the United States, they were quarantined on Sullivan’s Island in Charleston harbor. Then, they were taken on an auction and sold off by the merchants who brought them.¹²

It is difficult to estimate accurately the scale of this forced migration. In practice, proper documentation was not carried, and some of it disappeared throughout the years. What is more, lots of slaves were brought illegally, or were not registered at all in order to avoid paying taxes. Historians presume that the number of slaves, who were shipped from 1502 to the mid-nineteenth century, was between ten and twelve million people, that is only five percent of all Africans brought to both Americas. Robin D. G. Kelley and Earl Lewis give the numbers, which illustrate where African slaves were shipped between 1502 and 1870.

Table 1. The number of African slaves brought from Africa between 1502 and 1870.

| Place | The number of slaves shipped in years 1502-1870 |
|-----------------------|---|
| British North America | 550,000 |
| Spanish America | 2,000,000 |
| British Caribbean | 2,500,000 to 3,000,000 |
| French Caribbean | 1,600,000 |
| Dutch Caribbean | 50,000 |
| Brazil | 4,000,000 to 5,000,000 |
| Danish Caribbean | 50,000 |

Source: Kelley, Lewis. *To Make our Word Anew*, p. 6.

According to Table one, the highest number of slaves shipped from Africa was in Brazil and British Caribbean. Nowadays most of the African Americans occupy Caribbean, Brazil, and the United States. However, people of African descent populate in slender numbers in countries like Canada, Mexico, Venezuela, and Colombia. Such a settlement of black people may be associated with colonization, because it is similar to that one from the 16th and 17th century, when the slave trade began in 1502. Africans were captured and transported on ships into Caribbean island and the colonies of Central and South America, first by Spanish colonists and later by the Portuguese ones.¹³

Through years 1620 to 1700, ships brought to both Americas more black people from the African coast, than immigrants from Europe and Asia. Their life on new land was short. In Spanish and Portuguese colonies, slaves were worked to death. The situation of slaves in the colonies governed by the British Crown was different. A lifetime of an average slave was

¹² Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: a History*. Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1998. p. 67.

¹³ Kelley, Lewis, *To Make our Word Anew*. p. 3-7.

longer, because conditions were less terrible and labor demands were lower. Another thing that distinguishes the North America from the Latin and South ones is a growth of an enslaved population through a child birth. Table 2. shows a total and slave population in the territory, that later became the United States.

Table 2. Black and Total Populations in Colonial North America, 1620-1700.

| | 1620 | 1640 | 1650 | 1660 | 1670 | 1680 | 1690 | 1700 |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Black population | 60 | 597 | 1,600 | 2,920 | 4,535 | 6,971 | 16,792 | 27,817 |
| Total population | 4,646 | 26,634 | 50,368 | 75,058 | 111,935 | 151,507 | 210,372 | 250,888 |
| Percent black | 1.3 | 2.2 | 3.2 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 4.6 | 8.0 | 11.1 |

Source: Nell Irvin Painter. *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and its Meanings. 1619 to the Present.* p. 22.¹⁴

The growth of the African American population was sizable, from only sixty people to almost twenty-eight thousand within 80 years. Definitely, such a rapid growth of the slavery population was influenced by the growth of the plantation economy. Within the next century, the growth of the African American population was also noticeable, however the scale of a forced migration was limited. By 1810 most of the African Americans, about 85 percent, were born in America. Table 3 shows the growth of the Black population by natural increase, as well as by import from Africa between 1710 and 1790.¹⁵

Table 3. Black and Total Population in British North America, 1710-1790.

| | 1710 | 1720 | 1730 | 1740 | 1750 | 1760 | 1770 | 1780 | 1790 |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Black population | 44,866 | 68,839 | 91,021 | 150,024 | 236,420 | 325,806 | 459,822 | 575,420 | 757,208 |
| Total population | 331,711 | 466,185 | 629,445 | 905,563 | 1,170,760 | 1,593,625 | 2,148,076 | 2,780,369 | 3,929,214 |
| Percent Black | 13.5 | 14.8 | 14.5 | 16.6 | 20.2 | 20.4 | 21.4 | 20.7 | 19.3 |

Source: Nell Irvin Painter. *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and its Meanings. 1619 to the Present.* p. 33.

There is a visible slight decrease of Black population from 21.4 percent in 1770 to 19.3 percent in 1790. However, the Black population is growing rapidly from 459,822 in 1770 to 757,208 in 1790. The difference in percentage is a result of rapidly growing white population.

¹⁴ The figures include an undisclosed number of Indians.

¹⁵Painter, *Creating Black Americans.* p. 22 and 35.

James Oliver Horton describes life in Jamestown, aforementioned at the beginning of this chapter as the first British settlement in the North America, as extremely arduous and challenging. The first settlers had to encounter lots of difficulties. They were not only decimated by diseases, but also had to protect themselves from game abounding in the forest. To make matters worse, native Americans were also causing sever difficulties. Pioneers were invading their land and trying to force them to work. As a consequence, Indians were striving to protect their territories. Thus, the first Americans needed labor productivity to produce the food, handle in everyday life and obviously to work on tobacco fields as well as to protect the colony. The need for workforce was so fundamental, that in the same year as the Dutch ship brought the first Africans, the British one brought about a hundred youngsters from Britain. Those poor young boys from London came to America to work as servants in the colony. They, as well as some newly arrived Africans, were treated as indentured servants. It means, that they signed a contract to work as cheap labor for a set number of years, after which they were to be free.¹⁶

However, Horton explains, that by the middle of the fifteenth century the division into black and white slaves exacerbated. The black ones were not treated equally. They were legally enforced to arduous work and more severely and unfairly punished for their crimes.¹⁷ A sentence pronounced by the Virginia General Court in 1640 may be a great example of unequal treatment of African Americans. In this case, three servants: a Dutchman, a Scot and a negro, were accused of running away from their master to Maryland. They committed the same crime, however the court sentenced the white ones “to serve their masters for one additional year and then the colony for three more, but the third being a negro named John Punch shall serve his said master or his assigns for the time of his natural life here or else where”.¹⁸

Colonial law was rapidly changing against Africans and was different in several colonies. For example, according to one of the common laws, all people were allowed to keep gun in order to protect themselves, accept Negroes. Another discriminatory law regulating life terms for African women’s children was implemented in 1662 in Virginia. The base for this regulation comes from European tradition, in which children’s status in a society followed that of their fathers. In the American colonies, however, Black children were inheriting their status and freedom from their African mothers.¹⁹ Such regulations meaningfully shaped structure of slavery. Children’s status, which followed that of their mothers meant that they are also slaves. What is more, even if they are their owner’s children, they do not have any rights to his possessions, because they are only slaves, just like their mother.²⁰

Regardless of the fact that people of African descent were brought to both Americas in order to live in bondage, some of them did not live in slavery, even in the 16th century. There were those, who managed to escaped from tyranny, and those, who were born free. Additionally, there is one more astonishing fact, that was a great development in life and position of the Blacks in American society at that time. The first town – San Lorenzo de los Negros – was founded and controlled by free African Americans in Mexico. It received its charter in 1617. It was the first endeavor to freedom from slavery and to subsistence among resident American population.²¹

¹⁶ Horton, *Landmarks of African American History*. p. 14-18.

¹⁷ Horton, *Landmarks of African American History*. p. 19.

¹⁸ Jordan Winthrop. “Modern Tensions and the Origins of American Slavery.” [ed.] Heuman Gad, Walvin James, *The Slavery Reader*. London: Routledge, 2003. p. 115.

¹⁹ Horton, *Landmarks of African American History*. p. 19-20

²⁰ Horton, *Landmarks of African American History*. p. 23-25.

²¹ Kelley, Lewis, *To Make our Word Anew*. p. 3.

The law in Mexico was not so stringent about African-Americans, and Mexicans accepted them until Texas revolution in the years 1836-1846, in which American colonists in Texas secured the independence of that region from Mexico and established a republic. Thus, free negroes started to overflow from United States, especially in the first half of the 19th century. Some of them were afraid of possible reenslavement in the States. The others could not only elude from slavery, but also from social pressure of more populated areas. Marriages with white men and women were not prohibited here, their children could acquire education. What is more, they were able to follow a variety of occupations, from farmers to blacksmiths.²²

For those apparent political and social reasons, Benjamin Lundy, a white abolitionist, and Nicholas Drouett, a mulatto who was an officer in the Mexican army, hankered to create a colony of free African-Americans from the United States in Texas in the 1830's. Astonishingly, the Mexican government supported and accepted this controversial proposal, however most of the white society from Texas and the United States rejected it.²³ The whole plan collapsed totally together with the end of the Mexican rule. Those changes at first quickly resulted in limitation of Black immigrants, and than the conditions of those living in Texas rapidly transformed. Alwyn Barr explains, that:

“After annexation the state of Texas adopted even more elaborate restrictions on the life of free Negroes. For crimes they faced branding, whipping, pilloring, and forced labor on public works – punishments generally reserved for slaves rather than free men. Free Negroes could expect from twenty-five to a hundred lashes for insulting, abusive, or threatening language to whites. They could not have firearms, gamble, hire slaves, or dispense medicine, nor could they preach without two slaveholders as witnesses. Because of these limitations and continued opposition to their immigration, the free black population decreased from 397 in 1850 to 355 in 1860.”²⁴

The disparity between slaves and their masters had always been glaring. The unequal struggle between slave holders and their laborers depended on a large-scale violence. Brutal treatment occurred on almost every plantation. It was a simple and reliable method for demonstrating masters' position of power and influence on the plantations. “Masters thought of themselves as the monarchs of their plantations and likened their authority over their slaves to *that* of a king over his subjects.”²⁵

Slave life and slave communities varied substantially depending on region which they occupied. Ira Berlin differentiates four different African American communities: the first one in the North, the second in the Chesapeake region, another in the costal lowcountry of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, and the last one in the lower Mississippi Valley.

“In each region, slavery had its own geography, demography, economy, society, and – of course – history. Slave life evolved differently in the North, where slave labor supplemented that of family members and servants in an economy based on commerce and mixed agriculture; in the South Carolina lowcountry, where chattel bondage arrived with the first settlers and had little competition as the main source of labor on the great rice and indigo

²² Kelley, Lewis, *To Make our Word Anew*. p. 8.

²³ Kelley, Lewis, *To Make our Word Anew*. p. 9.

²⁴ Barr Alwyn, *Black Texans: a history of African Americans In Texas, 1528-1995*, Austin, Texas: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996. p. 9-12.

²⁵ Olwell Robert, *Masters, slaves, and subjects: the culture of Power In the South Karolina Low Country, 1740-1790*. New York, Cornell University Press, 1998.p. 3.

plantations; in the Chesapeake, where black-slave and white-servant labor developed in tandem within an economy organized around the production of tobacco; and in the lower Mississippi Valley, where an ill-defined labor system groped for a staple crop until the sudden emergence of sugar and cotton production transformed all.”²⁶

Inevitably, all those differences aroused from growing demand for labor in the southern plantations, and limited in the north. Another important factor, that influenced those distinctions was the attitude of slaveholders toward slaves. People in the South were convinced that not everyone in the American society is equal. There are those, who are the rulers – whites, and those who are ruled – blacks. This social balance between white and black had a fundamental impact on treatment of slaves.

Another method for submitting was selling out members of African Americans’ families. Slaveholders were often separating husbands from wives, children from their parents. Even having a status of a free person did not perfectly preserve African Americans from experiencing abuse. Such practices as kidnapping black children from their parents and putting them into bondage of slavery occurred frequently.²⁷ What is more, slaves were brought from different parts of Africa. It means, that cultures, habits and languages spoken by them varied according to area where they lived. Thus slave-owners were mixing them to encumber in communication.²⁸

Slavery was specific in particular parts of the British North America. To describe life and conditions of average people leaving in bondage, I focused on region of South Carolina, according to its topography known also as low country. Slaves here were extremely numerous and were considered as a fundamental factor of economic growth of this area. What is more, an institution of chattel slavery had its origins in Low Country. Robert Olwell describes region of South Carolina as a *slave society*, thus the issues of slaves were prevalent in political and public life or churches.²⁹

In the southern plantations the most common way for punishing was whipping. The picture below shows an African American with many scars on his back after whipping.

A historian Robert Olwell brings attention to the fact, that people from the south of America mostly had their origins in Great Britain. Consequently, “(...) the public arenas, languages, and rituals within which slaves and masters contested were the transplanted and transformed institutions and discourses of the English law, the established church, the marketplace (and market relations), and the plantation great house (and patriarchy).”³⁰ In addition to this, the “cultivation of power” and inequality in the society also came from England, and played a significant role in relations between slaves and their masters. Inevitably, such “cultivation of power” was indispensable to keep slaves in bondage and to reduce possible rebellions and revolutions, that were rare in fact.³¹

However, later historical facts have shown, that African Americans were able to take a determined action against imposed despotism and tyranny, when only opportunity aroused.

²⁶ Berlin Ira, *Many thousands gone: the first two centuries of slavery in North America*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000. p. 7.

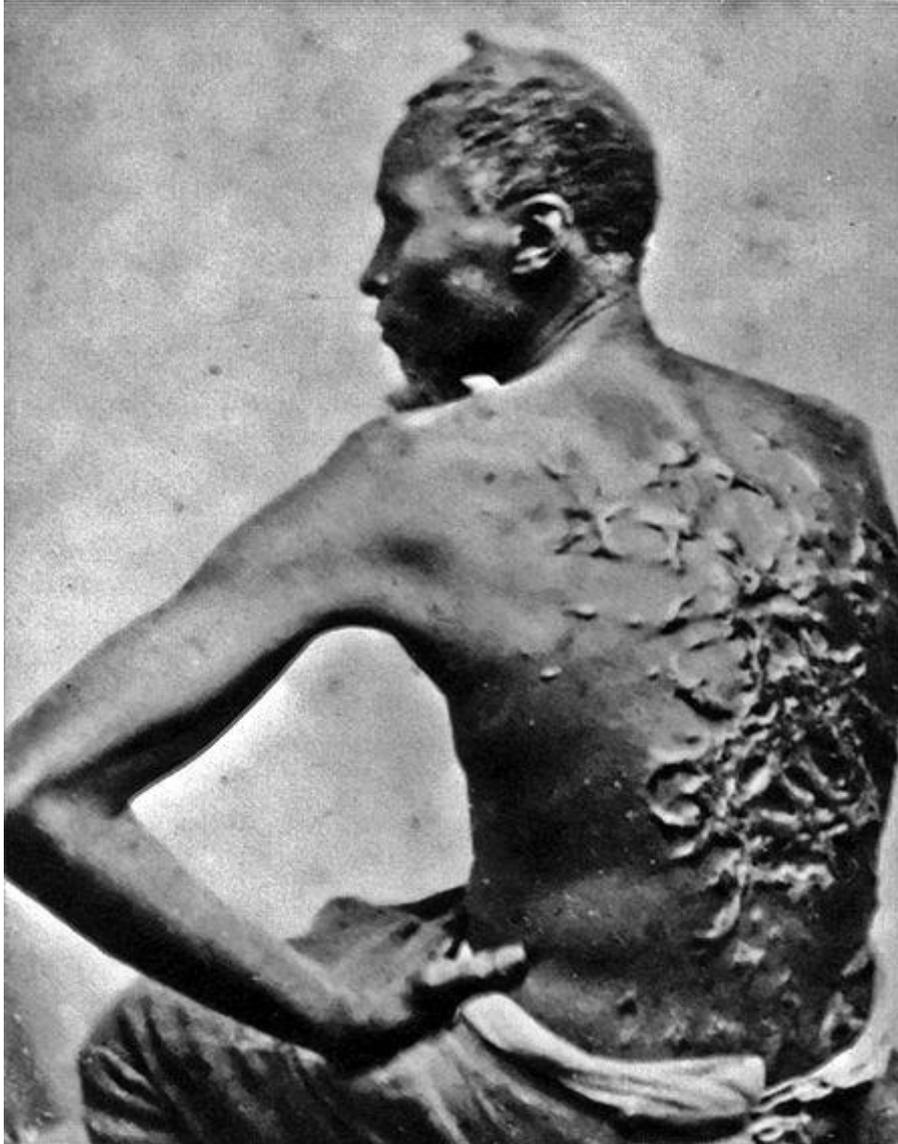
²⁷ Landau Elanie, Fleming to Freedom on the Underground Railroad: the Courageous Slaves, Agents, and Conductors, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Twenty-First Century Books, 2006. p. 13.

²⁸ Edgar, *South Carolina: a history*. p. 67.

²⁹ Olwell, *Masters, slaves, and subjects*. p. 5-6.

³⁰ Olwell, *Masters, slaves, and subjects*. p. 7.

³¹ ibidem



Picture 1. Scars of a whipped slave (April 2, 1863, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA).

Original caption: "Overseer Artayou Carrier whipped me. I was two months in bed sore from the whipping. My master come after I was whipped; he discharged the overseer. The very words of poor Peter, taken as he sat for his picture." This is a different photograph than the other ones, it is not cropped. Author unknown.³²

1.2. Slave culture and religion

Admittedly, not only dark skin color, but also African American culture separate and distinguish people of African descent from white Americans. Many things, such as language spoken by African Americans, called Black English, kinds of music like jazz, blues and hip-hop or different kinds of dancing are known as a phenomenon. Turbulent history has inevitably shaped their culture. Slavery, persecutions, racial segregation, struggle for freedom have left a permanent imprint and molded not only their cultural heritage, but also their way of life.³³

³² Scars of a whipped man, 2 April 1863, author unknown, <<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f6/Whippedslaveedit.jpg>>, (2 May 2010).

³³ Painter, *Creating Black Americans*. p. 25.

Basically, hard work defined slaves' existence on the plantations. However, it was not the only task they had to cope with. Inhuman conditions and severe restrictions did not cease the cultural life of African Americans. Incidentally, the owners granted holiday permission, or harvest festivities, whereas slaves, "like other working peoples, expressed themselves in song, dance, prayer, and fables by which they understood their world and plotted to create another more to their liking".³⁴

According to Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson, the first African American songs and lyrics, stories, dances and even humor have their roots in campfire gatherings. Sitting around the fire and telling stories or jokes, which were very often about their cruel masters or their hard and sad lives, enslaved people wanted to provide themselves with some entertainment and forget about their problems and weariness at least for a while.³⁵

African American music may be divided into two different kinds. The first of them was energetic and enthusiastic, and connected with European instruments. Later, it was transformed into different kinds of popular music like for example jazz or ragtime. The second form of African American music was a mix of European sacred music with African rhythms, that mutated into spirituals. An important attribute of enslaved Americans' music was *juba*:

"Instead of using instruments – or sometimes in addition – women and men 'patted juba (or juber).' This involved making music by tapping their feet to keep the strong rhythm and embroidering that rhythm by clapping hands and slapping things. One person, the 'juber rhymer,' would improvise lyrics, which were spoken, not sung."³⁶

This way of dancing and making music was also described in 'Beloved' by Toni Morrison.

Singing on plantations during the work was an integral part of African American culture since the very beginning of slavery. However the second kind of music, the spiritual one, commenced when African Americans were converted into Christianity. At first they learned the lyrics of the psalms which they heard in churches. However, in the 1730s a religious movement called The Great Awakening transformed the social and religious life in America. This religious revival gave people possibility to relive religious practices in more emotional way instead of strict puritan rules. Dancing and singing was frequent in many African tribes, thus African Americans quickly absorbed this emotional liberty and commenced music, that became one of the symbols of American culture.³⁷

Religious life on Southern plantations was moderately problematic. There were some exceptions, when slaves were allowed to attend religious ceremonies together with their owners. What is more, from the late eighteenth century they also had their own churches. However, after the repression that started in the 1820s and 1830s, enslaved people rather could not gather together even in churches. Since those times, religious practices changed into secret services. Enslaved people were praying in their cabins or in the woods, struggling to combat the menace of beating or whipping. An important fact is that in some songs, that could be sang in the fields, there were hidden meanings with antislavery messages. Thus, songs were not only a form of massive and spirited resistance, but also a system of oral communication between African Americans.³⁸

³⁴ Berlin, *Many thousands gone*. p. 5-6.

³⁵ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 48.

³⁶ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 49.

³⁷ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 50.

³⁸ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 50.

1.3. American Revolution and its meaning to the slave population

Reaching the shore of America, many of the European colonists craved for political or religious freedom. They also aspired to fetch an economic freedom and stability. They wanted to possess a piece of land and achieve prosperity by hard work. However, these freedoms were controlled and limited by the British dominion. Thus, Americans successfully managed to resist British regime and started the American Revolution in the years 1775-1783. Since that time, United States have become an independent country. But this freedom did not concern hundred of thousands of slaves who were also part of American society. American Revolution, however, is an extremely important part for slaves, because it gave them an opportunity of gaining freedom.

Revolution and creation of an independent American country, with its own government, contributed heavily to many opportunities for fighting for freedom and equal rights. For example, African Americans petitioned Congress and the state legislature while creating the Declaration of Independence, to abolish slavery and give blacks equal rights. Another action was taken in Boston, where African Americans applied for city money, that whites were getting, to educate their children. Another request was announced in Norfolk, where blacks wanted to have rights to testify in court. Those are only a few examples of African Americans' active participation in fighting for equal rights and abolition of slavery.³⁹

But why was this struggle for freedom so prolonged? Frankie Y. Bailey and Alice P. Green draw attention to the fact, that George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were also slave owners. The abolition of slavery with the formation of the new nation was the most ardent desire of Thomas Jefferson, however, at the same time he had never freed his own slaves. "At the time when he wrote the draft of the Declaration of Independence, Tomas Jefferson was the second largest slaveowner in Albemarle Country, Virginia, holding 175 slaves."⁴⁰ Thus, how a man, who speaks so movingly and forcefully about equal rights of all humans and abolition of slavery, exploits at the same time such a huge number of slaves? Numerous powerful Americans and politicians accumulated their wealth and properties by owning slaves. Thus, perhaps for some of them, fighting for equal rights for all Americans, freedom and abolition of slavery was only a political propaganda? To some extent, the main reason against complete abolition of slavery was an economic problem, especially in the Southern plantations.

However, people were anxious about numerous slave population and possible revolts. The seriousness of the situation arouse, when George Washington rejected appeals and request from slave men, who wanted to join the American army. To make things worst, Lord Dunmore, the British military commander in Virginia, guaranteed freedom to those African Americans, who joined his army. As a result, that promise produced a flood of African-American volunteers in the British Army. That fact created panic and nervousness among not only Virginian slave keepers, but also among the men like George Washington, who through the blind racism deprived African Americans of a chance for revolution against oppressive masters.⁴¹

As a result, thousands of slave men, usually from Virginia, fought with the British. Five thousand, most of them were from the North, but also free ones from Virginia and Maryland, were fighting for the American independence. Chaos of the war brought considerable changes to some African Americans. Many of them embarked on British ships and settled in England, New Scotia, West Indies, and even in Africa. Some of them started a new life in America, as

³⁹ Zinn Howard, *A People's History of the United States: 1492-present*, Harlow: Person Education Limited, 2003. p. 88.

⁴⁰ Bailey Frankie, Green Alice, "*Low never here*": a Social History of African American Responses to Issues of Crime and Justice, Westport: Praeger Publisher, 1999. p. 4.

⁴¹ Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*. p. 82.

free men. According to historian Howard Zinn, the entire elimination of slavery was implemented very slowly.

“As late as 1810, thirty thousand blacks, one-fourth of the black population of the North, remained slaves. In 1840 there were still a thousand slaves in the North. In the upper South, there were more free Negroes than before, leading to more control legislation. In the lower South, slavery expanded with the growth of rice and cotton plantations.”⁴²

1.4. Struggle for freedom

The supervision by slave keepers was so constant and strict, that in fact, they were not able to commit a crime. Some of the methods of resistance against plantation owners were attempts to escape or even kill their masters. Sometimes, slaves even gave rise to small revolts, but without noticeable consequences. One of the dozens of slave revolts was planned in Gloucester County, Virginia, in 1681. However, rebellious slaves were caught and beheaded. In 1708, seven whites were killed in Newton, Long Island. In this revolt among many slaves, at least one black woman was involved. Not only bloody and armed forms of resistance were encountered.⁴³

Many slaves were refusing to work, the others were trying to escape. Another way of escaping from slavery was committing suicide. In many cases, such form of resistance was not an act of despair, but was caused by their beliefs. Many African Americans believed, that after dead, they will return to Africa and their families.⁴⁴

A slave, who led the most significant and bloodiest slave rebellion was Nat Turner. In this the largest slave uprising in the American history, that took place in Southampton County, in Virginia state, about fifty-seven whites were killed. According to Frankie Y. Bailey and Alice P. Green, the inspiration to Nat Turner and his 66 revolutionists was David Walker and his antislavery pamphlet published in September of 1829.⁴⁵ It was the first written and so radical anti-slavery document, which was calling slaves to rebellion:

“I therefore ask the whole American people, had I not rather die, or be put to death, than to be a slave to any tyrant, who takes not only my own, but my wife and children's lives by the inches? Yea, would I meet death with avidity far! far!! in preference to such *servile submission* to the murderous hands of tyrants.”⁴⁶

David Walker believed, that African Americans deserved the same rights and opportunities as the whites. He said, that the United States of America should belong to the whites as well as to the blacks, because they also helped to build it:

“Let no man of us budge one step, and let slave-holders come to beat us from our country. America is more our country, than it is the whites—we have enriched it with our *blood and tears*. The greatest riches in all America have

⁴² Zinn. *A People's History of the United States*. p. 88.

⁴³ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 28.

⁴⁴ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 29.

⁴⁵ Bailey, Green. “*Low never here*”: a Social History. p. 34.

⁴⁶ Wilentz Sean, *Africans in America. David Walker's Appeal*, <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2931t.html>>, (10 June 2010).

arisen from our blood and tears: -- and will they drive us from our property and homes, which we have earned with our *blood*?"⁴⁷

The appeal shaped pride and self-confidence in hearts of African Americans. It gave them hope and strength for incoming changes and for better future.

The northern part of the United States subverted slavery and wanted to abolish this outrageous institution. For instance, Pennsylvania's state legislature announced Gradual Abolition of Slavery Act in 1780s. To stop slavery in this state, this law included a number of provisions. Another important step to abrogate slavery was taken in 1808, when the U.S. Congress banned the importation of slaves from Africa. However American-born slaves were still sold on auctions in the southern states.⁴⁸

The situation of African Americans living in the North was improved. Many blacks had a status of a free person, however they were not totally free. The racist segregation and divisions between those two races were visible in every aspect of African Americans' lives. Whites passed many legislations on free blacks, that denied their rights and freedom and equal opportunities. For instance, since 1774, free blacks were not allowed to deliver mail. The law implemented in 1792 by the Congress, precluded African Americans serving in a militia. What is more, many of the states revoked voting rights at the end of the 19th century. However, free African Americans were fighting with this unreal freedom. Although resistance and struggle against prosecutions, rampant discrimination and white supremacy was difficult, they were setting up private businesses, founding newspapers and even establishing schools for their children and their own churches.⁴⁹

1.5. Underground Railroad

Apart from strict rules and punishments in the southern plantations, conditions and accommodation were terrible. Slaves were forced to all-day and enormously demanding work on plantations in baking sun. Sleeping conditions were also very sever. They ought to sleep in extremely hot or cold temperatures. Not only had they very exhausting work, but also slept barely. Their masters provided them with starvation rations. Thus, African Americans started to run away to the Northern parts of the United States.

Some of them escaped during the night, the others managed to runaway from the fields in their master's unguarded moment. They were hiding in the woods and swamps, and walking long distances. To survive, they were hunting small animals and eating plants. Elaine Landau cites a piece of narrative written by a former slave Ralph Roberts, *A Slave's Story*, in which he gives details of a run.

"In one instance, I knew two men to live more than year in a cave, in a large wood, about a mile from their master's house. The [animals] on the adjacent farms supplied them with meat, and [other scraps were] easily gotten from their fellow-slaves – for, in almost every such case, regular communication is kept up between the fugitive and his class [other slaves] This is done with all possible precaution. Least some white person detects them. But they never fear a betrayal from one of their own race."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Wilentz Sean, *Africans in America. David Walker's Appeal*,

<<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2931t.html>>, (10 June 2010).

⁴⁸ Landau Elanie, *Fleming to Freedom on the Underground Railroad: the Courageous Slaves, Agents, and Conductors*, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Twenty-First Century Books, 2006. p. 8-9.

⁴⁹ Halperin Earle Jonathan, *The Routledge Atlas of African American history*, New York: Routledge, 2000. p. 33.

⁵⁰ Landau, *Fleming to Freedom on the Underground Railroad*. p. 18.

The rumor about abolition of slavery in the northern states and about good people from the north, who believed in equal rights of every human being, spread rapidly across the plantations. This information quickly inflamed strong will to fight for freedom, and intensified escapes from plantation owners.⁵¹

Many people from the north, as well black as white, were cooperating with fugitives by providing them with food or shelter. Such a movement of helping slaves was known as the Underground Railroad. Historians estimate, that its flourish was between American Revolution (1775-1783) and the Civil War (1861-1865). It was not a national, implemented by government system, but rather a social movement of people, who were against slavery and had an opportunity to help exhausted runaways. Moreover, some religious groups that were deprecating slavery, such as the Quakers, also were instrumental in developing the Underground Railroad movement. This secret system was the most burgeoning in free border states, such as Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania and Ohio. The Underground Railroad routs led also to farther located states, even to Canada, where volunteers helped African Americans to settle, find work and start new free life.⁵²

1.6. Civil war and emancipation

The presidential election in 1860 was a huge dismay for most whites from the South. Abraham Lincoln, was a representative of created in the North Republican Party. Republicans were anti-slavery, and the Democratic Party, on the other hand, was closely identified with Southern plantation owners.⁵³ The victory of the Republican Party and a perspective of destroying the whole system of slavery meant for the protagonists of the Democratic Party a total revolution. They were afraid of an economic collapse. All those anxieties led to the outbreak of the Civil War, that lasted four bloody years.

At the beginning of the war, president Lincoln announced, that he is not fighting for slavery abolition, but for the union of all states. In August 22, 1862, he wrote a letter to Horace Greeley, an editor of the influential newspaper, *New York Tribune*, in which he explained:

“My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and I forbear because I do not believe it would help save the Union – I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors; and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views.”⁵⁴

To some extent, the words of Abraham Lincoln were compelling, but in fact, in considerable measure the Civil War was a struggle for or against slavery.

Those African Americans, who had voting rights, supported Abraham Lincoln's candidature. They also wanted to participate in the Civil War, fight against their oppressors from the South. What is more, free blacks wanted to prove to whites, that they are patriotic and deserve for equal rights as the white part of the American society. However, whites were wary

⁵¹ Landau, *Fleming to Freedom on the Underground Railroad*. p. 19.

⁵² Landau, *Fleming to Freedom on the Underground Railroad*. p. 20-21.

⁵³ Earle, *The Routledge Atlas of African American history*. p. 126.

⁵⁴ Quoted in: Jenkins Wilbert, *Climbing up to Glory: a Short History of African Americans During the Civil War and Reconstruction*, Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc. 2002. p. 3.

of recruiting free black men into the army.⁵⁵ In addition to this, the Fugitive Act of 1850 compelled refugee slaves to return to their owners.⁵⁶ The Fugitive Slave Act was recognized by slaves as intolerance and racialism. All those obstacles did not discourage them from fighting with Republicans, because they believed, that Union victory will led to slavery abolition. Thus, black soldiers were forming *military clubs* and regiments which were supporting the Northern army on a battle fields.⁵⁷

Another important problem discouraging African American men in joining the army was an unequal salary, which was much lower for the blacks. Thus, some of them were joining Confederation army. General Benjamin F. Butler, the commander of Fortress Monroe started to put the runaway slaves into the Union army. He realized, that returning slaves to their owners will enrich them and strengthen the Southern states. In a reply to Butler's idea, the Congress ratified the first Confiscation Act in 1861, which abolished the Fugitive Slave Act. The second Confiscation Act passed in 1862 "declared contrabands forever free".⁵⁸

At the beginning of the war the president estimated, that the issue of slavery is not a root cause of the war. However, with the progress of the war African Americans and white abolitionists imposed on Lincoln to take some steps to abolish slavery. Thus, on January 1st, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln enacted the Emancipation Proclamation. According to this law African Americans from rebellious states relished freedom. Than after war, three amendments to the Constitution were passed by the Congress.⁵⁹ First, the 13th Amendment that abolished slavery was ratified in 1865:

"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."⁶⁰

On September 7th, 1868, US Congress ratified the 14th Amendment about citizenship rights:

"All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."⁶¹

The 14th Amendment helped rise the status of African Americans within the American society. What is more, it intended to provide the newly freed slaves with equal rights. Still, the Southerners kept denying the Blacks their rights, so the 15th Amendment- 'Race No Bar to Vote' was announced on March 2nd, 1870:

⁵⁵ Jenkins, *Climbing up to Glory*. p. 4-6.

⁵⁶ Painter, *Creating Black Americans*. p. 109.

⁵⁷ Jenkins, *Climbing up to Glory*. p. 4-6.

⁵⁸ Painter, *Creating Black Americans*. p. 109.

⁵⁹ Kelley, Lewis, *To Make our Word Anew*. p. 227-240.

⁶⁰ *The United States Constitution*, <<http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html#Am13>>, (28 July 2010).

⁶¹ *The United States Constitution*, <<http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html#Am14>>, (28 July 2010).

“The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”⁶²

In addition to those three Amendments, Congress established the Freedmen’s Bureau. The main aim of this institution was to deal with problems of freedmen, refugees and abandonment lands, and to help freed African Americans to start a new life. Another attempt to protect free blacks’ rights was the Civil Rights Act of 1866. This law overturned the Black Codes, which were discriminatory and undermined the rights of blacks.⁶³

Civil War ended, but African Americans still had to cope with discrimination and inequality. Although they were fighting for freedom, they were still considered as a lower class of the American society. For the next hundred years they were under almost absolute white supremacy. Nevertheless, all changes resulting from the Civil War, have revolutionized and reshaped not only American politics, but also the whole social system, especially in the Confederation Southern states.

Years 1867-1869 were known as Congressional Reconstruction. During this period Congress was attempting to rebuild the South.

CHAPTER II

2. From a Black slave-woman to a Black free American

2.1. Female slave labor

The Southern plantation system was an environment, which main feature was a power of physical strength. In this society, physical force was resorted to substantiate the power of masters over slaves, as well as the power of men over women. According to Patricia Hill Collins, Jacqueline Jones, Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson, and many other writers specialized in black U.S. women history and social roles, this difficult environment in which slave women had to live has influenced significantly their lives even nowadays. Some stereotypes that derive from slavery period have a certain amount of influence in the way African American women’s social position, family role and employment are organized.

The range of slave women’s duties was so vast, that it is difficult to define it. Jacqueline Jones defines it in those words:

“If work is any activity that leads either directly or indirectly to the production of marketable goods, then slave women did nothing but work. Even their efforts to care themselves and their families helped to maintain the owner’s work force and to enhance its overall productivity.”⁶⁴

According to Jacqueline Jones, black slave women were fulfilling to valuable functions. One of the charges was hard physical work in the fields and production of staple crops. What is more, domestic chores such as washing, sewing or cooking were also obligations arisen from their masters’ will. Another role was a reproductive function. This duty not only enriched slave owners, but also developed the system of slavery. Thus, the owners were considering the

⁶² *The United States Constitution*, < <http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html#Am15>>, (28 July 2010).

⁶³ Kelley, Lewis. *To Make our Word Anew*. p. 243.

⁶⁴ Jones Jacqueline, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow. Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*, New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers. 1985. p. 14.

African Americans' family life as a profit-making institution, and were using women as not only producers, but also reproducers to their own economic purposes.⁶⁵

The variety of different tasks that women had to do was extremely vast. Hard work that demanded physical strength, such as clearing land from trees or chopping wood, was usually done by men. However, on some plantations, especially those small ones, where lower amount of slave labor was demanded, women were also ruthlessly exploited to arduous and demanding muscle power jobs. In other words, the smaller plantation was, the less attention did the slave holders put to the differences between sexes. Not only size of a plantation had an important influence on shared duties among both sexes: men and women, but also its degree of specialization. "For example, on one Virginia wheat farm, the men scythed and cradled the grain, women raked and bound it into sheaves, which children then gathered and stacked."⁶⁶ As the another example, Jacqueline Jones describes a case of Lizzie Atkins, who together with three other slaves worked on a twenty-five-acre plantation in Texas: "she helped to clear land, cut wood, and tend the livestock in addition to her other duties of hoeing corn, spinning thread, sewing clothes, cooking, washing dishes, and grinding corn."⁶⁷ As a rule, skilled occupations such as shoemaker or blacksmith, were usually assigned to men. Those jobs required to be done constantly and regularly, however women's life periods were often interrupted by pregnancy, child rearing and nursing.⁶⁸

There was one more group of slave women that should be mentioned. There were women, who were sold and bought in one specific purpose: a sexual one. Those were young and beautiful women, known as fancy girls. Because of their beauty and physical appearance their price was higher than the price, which slave owners had to pay for labor slaves. Those girls had to perform duties as sexual servants, however, they were not paid. They had no control over their own bodies, because their owner paid for it.⁶⁹

Rape and sexual abuse on the Southern plantations was exceedingly repeated. Sometimes women were used in sexual purpose by their masters and sometimes by other male slaves. Very often they were simply locked in cabin together with the other male slave, who had to impregnate her. However slave women, in contrast to fancy girls, could always at least try to resist and say that their body belongs to themselves and it is not a property of their masters. The refusal by women to accept sexual abuse was usually met with punishment, usually the corporal one.⁷⁰ Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson cite the words of Annie Wallace, a slave, who witnessed her mother's whipping:

"You know, there was an overseer who used to tie mother up in the barn with a rope around her arms up over her head, white she stood on a block. Soon as they got her tied, this block was moved and her feet dangled, you know, couldn't touch the floor. This old man, now, would start beating her naked until the blood ran down her back to her heels.... I asked mother what she done for them to beat and do her so. She said, 'Nothing other then refuse to be wife to this man'."⁷¹

⁶⁵ Jones. *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*. p. 11-12.

⁶⁶ Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*. p. 17.

⁶⁷ ibidem

⁶⁸ Jones. *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*. p. 18.

⁶⁹ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 48.

⁷⁰ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 53.

⁷¹ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 53.

Not only masters were responsible for cruelty and escalating violence. White women were also punishing slaves, especially females. Jacqueline Jones conjectures, that reason of using violence was their impotence and helplessness. When looking at slave women, they often saw themselves: women without any rights who were treated subjectively by their own husbands. They were avenging for their own weakness. Some of them were expressing their anger because of jealousy, because black women were not only a labor for many slave owners, but also a subject of the sexual abuse. All those emotions would be reflected in using violence towards black women.

“When punishing slave women for minor offenses, mistresses were likely to attack with any weapon available – knitting needles, tongs, a fork, butcher knife, ironing board, or pan of boiling water. In the heat of the moment, white women devised barbaric forms of punishment that resulted in the mutilation or permanent scarring of their female servants.”⁷²

Historically, African American women were ruthlessly exploited during the period of slavery. It affected also their families. Arduous and strenuous work extremely often caused them to miscarry. They were too overworked to spare time to their children and husbands. However, according to Patricia Hill Collins, the first years after abolition of slavery did not change the situation of African American women profoundly, especially those ones living in the South of America. Free Black women were usually assigned to two principal employments: the first one was work in the field, and the second was domestic work. Those occupations were badly paid. What is more, women had to work long hours. Another serious problem afflicted especially women who were domestic servants. They were often a victims of physical abuse. Patricia Hill Collins cites the words of African American woman who worked as a domestic servant at Southern house:

“I remember ... I lost my place because I refused to let the madam’s husband kiss me When my husband went to the man who had insulted me, the man cursed him, and slapped him, and – had him arrested!”⁷³

The most astonishing fact is that after being fined \$25, the Black man heard from the judge: “This court will never take the word of a nigger against the word of a white man”.⁷⁴ African Americans were not treated equally, they were discriminated not only at work, but also at court.⁷⁵ In fact, the conditions of working African American women through the first years after the emancipation did not differ considerably from those of the slavery period.

2.2. Courtship and marriage in bondage

Sexual love and the institution of marriage are probably the most significant and intimate aspects of people’s lives. Especially women conceive of this sphere as something confidential and very personal. However in the Southern plantations, this part of human relationships was under control of the masters. Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson quoted Katie Blackwell Johnson’s description of humiliating way of getting married:

⁷² Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*. p. 25-26.

⁷³ Hill Collins Patricia, *Black Feminist Thought*. Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. New York: Routledge, 2000. p. 54.

⁷⁴ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*: 54.

⁷⁵ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*: 52-55.

“Who married the slaves? Man, folks didn’t get married then. If a man saw a girl he liked he would ask his master’s permission to ask the master of the girl for her. If his master consented and her master consented then they came together. She lived on her plantation and he on his. The woman had no choice in the matter.”⁷⁶

Getting married was possible under one condition: a young couple had to ask their masters for permission. What is more, slaveholders had an influence on the nature and the time of the wedding ceremony. It was also frequent evidence, that they administered it, especially during the period, when marriage between slaves was illegal, and there was no necessity to bring the priest. Hence, masters, black preachers or elders, who were considered as the wisest of the slave community were performing the wedding ceremony.⁷⁷

Another often applied practice of formalizing a marriage was “jumping the broomstick.” It was a well known custom on the Southern plantations, in which the groom and the bride had to jump together over the broomstick. This tradition seems to come from Africa, however in fact, it derives from pre-Christian European customs. “Jumping the broomstick” was implemented by slaveholders to accentuate the lack of importance of slavery marriages and to satirize it. For young slave couples, on the other hand, this ritual was essential, serious and broadly employed. What is more, very often marriages recognized this way, were regarded as fundamental and grave, regardless of the fact, that according to the law they did not have legal force.⁷⁸

An important fact is that the main purpose of getting married by enslaved men and women was child rearing. The legacy of those sometimes loveless marriages was not important. Usually, African American men and women were just paired by their masters, excluding legal force or guarantee about marriage longevity. Therefore, a great number of marriages ended because of the sale of husband or wife on another plantation.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, there were many ways of attempts to get married, and to fight against the injustice and strict and total control of almost every aspect of slave lives implemented by slaveholders. However, it should be stated here, how slavery affected the institution of marriage, and what did it really mean to African American women. Principally, becoming a wife and especially a mother was slave women’s duty. Thus, usually they did not have any choice about whether or not rear children or become a wife, because it was demanded from them. Of course some of slave women had a chance of experience a joy of courtship, but if a woman could not find a husband by herself, she would be assigned one in order to fulfill her duty as a reproducer.⁸⁰

Replenishing the plantations was an acutely important task for African American women. If a woman was not able to rear children, first, she was assigned to another husband. If it did not help and she still was not pregnant, she was usually sold or assigned to the hardest and the most demanding jobs, to mark her uselessness in child supplement.⁸¹

For most of the slave women, the duty of being assigned to a husband and an obligation of having children since their early teens, was usually painful and traumatic experience. Some of them simply did not love their husbands. What is more, the women’s role as a reproducers

⁷⁶ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 42.

⁷⁷ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 43.

⁷⁸ ibidem

⁷⁹ Burgess Norma, Brown Eurnestine, *African-American Women: an Ecological Perspective*, New York: Falmer Press, 2000. p 7.

⁸⁰ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 43.

⁸¹ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 44.

as well as the fact, that they could not choose their husband on their own or decide, whether to become a mother or not, had also its consequences in women-men relationships. Some men were treating their wives degradingly and sometimes even brutally and cruelly. Physical love was treated as women's duty, it was something, they could not refuse. Thus, they often had to face with physical abuse and rape.⁸²

The end of the Civil War gave new opportunities to African Americans. They could relish freedom not only from slave owners, but also from their marriages foisted upon them by their masters, which were in many cases without legal force. However, a great number of free African American couples made some attempts to register their marriages. In North Carolina, for instance, twenty thousands slaves made their marriages legal, and in Virginia 2,817 marriages between African Americans were confirmed.⁸³

Those new African American families were trying to face new realities and start new and better lives. Nell Irvin Painter puts attention to the fact, that the changed gender roles of freed African Americans were visible after the Civil War, and has affiliated closely with the white middle-class Americans. As slaves, African Americans were mainly considered as a labor. In the contrary, freedom gave black men a chance to be a heads of the household, and women were recognized as wives and mothers of their children.⁸⁴

2.3. Black women and child rearing

The law implemented in 1662 in Virginia, defining an inherited children's status of a free person, according to their mothers' status, was very disastrous to slave women and their children. Those ones born to slave women were not only slaves, but also a property of their mothers' owner. This law caused, that for thousands of African American children it was a curse to have a slave mother.⁸⁵

The slave owners always were in a great quandary, how to find solution between using pregnant women to hard physical work or "protecting their investment in women as childbearers." In some plantations, pregnant slave women were treated leniently, however some of the slave keepers were cruel and inhumanly demanding. Physical abuse such as beating and whipping pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, "so that blood and milk flew mingled from their breasts,"⁸⁶ was frequent. A special method of whipping them used in the Southern plantations reflects their sadism in full force. Pregnant women ought to lay on their front, and put their abdomens into specially dug hole in the ground to protect still unborn child. Violent treatment aroused not only from pathological and brutal instincts of an individual masters, but also from the whole system of the Old South slavery.⁸⁷

Being a mother was slave women's duty, it was a part of their job. A great number of pregnancies were forced and unwanted. What is more, mothers did not want their children suffered the same fate. They also wanted to avert their children from being taken from their hands and sold on the other plantation. According to Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson, "there are a number of instances in which a slave woman simply decided to end her child's life rather than allow the child to grow up enslaved."⁸⁸ Tonny Morrison also presents

⁸² Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 68.

⁸³ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 45.

⁸⁴ Painter, *Creating Black Americans*. p. 106.

⁸⁵ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. 15-16.

⁸⁶ Quoted In: Painter. *Creating Black Americans*. p. 20.

⁸⁷ Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*. p. 20.

⁸⁸ Hine, Thompson, *A Shining Thread of Hope*. p. 102.

this problem in her novel *Beloved*. Abortion and infanticide occurred sporadically, but it was also a form of resistance against tyranny and the whole system of slavery.

Broadly speaking, African American mothers in bondage loved their children and were intended to provide for them the best possible care. Carrie Allen McCray enumerates four humanistic values, that flourished from cultural and historic heritage of slaves and have an influence on their lives and family relationships even nowadays:

- “1) our [African American’s] African cultural heritage,
- 2) our strong religious beliefs,
- 3) the “caring roles” into which we were placed because of social and economic situation,
- 4) recognition of the need for mutual aids in order to survive the oppressive societal forces we know so well.”⁸⁹

Those all four values derive from African American history and have a great emphasis on their family structures. First, according to many narratives people of African descent usually greatly concern themselves with institution of marriage, their families and children. What is more, another aspect which distinguishes African American culture is a general tendency among African Americans to take care for each other. This instinct derives from times of slavery and difficult times after an abolition of slavery. African Americans had to help each other, in order to survive tough times of tyranny on plantations and oppression and inequality after abolition of slavery. Turbulent and fascinating social and cultural history of people of African descent changed also attitude of African American women toward children. During the times of slavery they used to be mothers for their own children, other slaves’ babies and even for their white masters’ children. According to Carrie Allen McCray, this far-ranging caring function did not end together with abolition of slavery, and had a significant influence on structure, ties, as well as planning of new free African American families.

2.4. Black women in the Civil Rights Movement

This chapter consider the history of African American women’s involvement in antislavery movement and fight for equal rights for black people. When contemplating an involvement of notable African American women in antislavery movement many authors, such as Patricka Hill Collins or Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens, focused on their struggle for women’s rights and explain how black women made every endeavor to enable women of all colors and classes possibility of engagement in the political and social life.

Maria W. Stewart (1803-1879) was one of the first American women’s rights activist. She was not only encouraging and calling black women to fight for their rights, but also preached them to gain education and to become self-independent. In her words: “we have pursued the shadow, they have obtained the substance; we have performed the labor, they have received the profits; we have planted the vines, they have eaten the fruits of them”⁹⁰, Stewart indicated the injustice of the situation and life conditions in which African American women were living.⁹¹ She was a lecturer, abolitionist and a prolific essayist, her texts were published. What is more, she was the first U.S. woman, who was giving lectures in public on political themes. Her main accomplishments were not only published speeches and works, but also

⁸⁹ McCray Carrie, *The Black Woman and Family Roles*, [w:] La Frances Rodgers-Rose (red), *The Black Woman*, London, Sage Publications, 1980. 1980.

⁹⁰ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*. p. 1.

⁹¹ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*. p. 1.

established during the Civil War school for children, whose parents escaped from slavery.⁹² Her life and speeches were an inspiration for her successors, fighting for women's rights.

After 1865, a shameful and ignominious piece of American history revealed relations between black and white race. After emancipation, a form of racial violence called lynching was cultivated. The phrase lynching means "the murder of black individuals, primarily black men, by a white mob with no repercussions for the perpetrators."⁹³

According to Kathy A. Perkins, Judith L. Stephens, "lynching drama" is a genre that emerged in the twentieth century as one of the form of resistance against lynching. The most prolific authors of this genre who played significant role in its development and anti-lynching movement are African American artists, and especially women. They present in their works racial violence and the memories and emotions of its victims. What is more, lynching dramas, which existed in the American theatre for about one hundred years, demonstrate injustice and cruelty of lynching as well as its impact on victims' deepest feelings and attitudes, the feelings of their families and community in which they live.⁹⁴

African American women played an important role in anti-slavery movement. The first woman who started annual report and public speech on lynching in 1892 was Ida B. Wells. The other African American women listed by Kathy A. Perkins, Judith L. Stephens, who were influential and leading in fight for equality and against lynching practices were Mary Church Terrell famous for her essay "*Lynching from a Negro's Point of View*", Mary B. Talbert and her Anti-Lynching Crusade in 1922, and Mary McLeod Bethune's statement in which she appeals to southern white women to for help in fighting against racial violence. The action and involvement of those women not only contributed towards fight against lynching but also succeeded in raising social consciousness on issue of racial equality.⁹⁵

A reward for African American women's efforts is an organization that associated both white and black women called Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, that was formed in 1930. Although African American women played crucial and leading role in this anti-lynching movement, white women were also engaged. What is more, it is the first organization in which white American women appeared and performed an active actions. One of the attempts to encourage the American society in anti-lynching spirit was sponsoring and promotion of a contest for plays, which topic focused directly on lynching.

In fact, at the beginnings of Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching the most bloody years of racial inequality and persecutions almost reached to the end. Kathy A. Perkins, Judith L. Stephens reveal some important figures about lynching incidents:

"lynching reached their peak in 1892 when 255 individuals (155 black victims, 100 white) were killed by lynch mobs. As the years progressed, the number of lynchings decreased, but the ratio of black to white victims increased. Of the 100 lynchings recorded from 1924 to 1928,91 of the victims were black and 9 were white."⁹⁶

⁹² Richardson Marilyn, *Maria W. Stewart: Biography from Answers.com*, <<http://www.answers.com/topic/maria-w-stewart>>, (25 August 2010).

⁹³ Perkins Kathy, Stephens Judith, *Strange Fruit. Plays on Lynching by American Women*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998. p. 3.

⁹⁴ Perkins, Stephens, *Strange Fruit*. p. 4-5.

⁹⁵ Perkins, Stephens, *Strange Fruit*. p. 5-6.

⁹⁶ Perkins, Stephens, *Strange Fruit*. p. 8.

During the Great Depression period, frustration and disappointing of white Americans resulted in increase of lynching acts.⁹⁷

CHAPTER III

3. The stories written by sweat and blood

3.1. The short introduction of authors

When attempting any analysis of some literary work one should firstly familiarize himself with life, time period and other works of the writer. Such study is an essential key in struggling to understand and interpret correctly the work of the author, because it gives background information about world and realities in which author lived and help to understand how he conceived the world and people surrounding him.

3.1.1. Alice Walker

Alice Malsenior Walker, a prolific author of several novels and children's books, as well as numerous essays and even poems, was born on February 9, 1944, in Eatonton, Georgia. She had seven older siblings, she was the youngest one. Her father, Willie Lee Walker, was a tenant farmer, and her mother, Minnie Tallulah Grant Walker, worked as a maid and helped her husband on a farm. Her family lived in poor conditions, but Alice's childhood was happy.⁹⁸

Storytelling was important to Alice's mother. Alice and her siblings grew up listening to stories about ghosts, dreams as well as true stories about their grandparents and great-grandparents. Minnie Walker taught her children about African-American traditions, culture and folklore.⁹⁹

From her early years she was adored and considered as a lovely, precocious and gifted child by her older family and community. At the age of four she was bright enough to start first grade. What is more, her first teacher Mrs. Reynolds said that "Alice was one of the smartest children she'd ever taught."¹⁰⁰ However, Alice's mother had one more purpose to let her daughter go to school so quickly. Walker's parent were farmers, but they also worked on plantations owned by white people. White landowners from the South were convicted that even small children, that are able to pick up cotton, should help their parents in the fields. Minnie, Alice's mother, made that way an attempt to avert her daughter, and rest of Alice's older siblings, from being forced to exhausting work.¹⁰¹

As a child, Alice was cheerful and self-confident. However, at the age of eight she met with an unfortunate accident while playing with her two older brothers. One of them shot with his BB gun, and hurt his little sister's eye. This accident not only lead up with lost sight in her right eye, but also left a scar on it. What is more, this experience had a profound influence on her female psyche. She lost her joy of life, and was not so sociable as she used to be. She started to consider herself as not attractive because of her injury. She was living in isolation and reading avidly. After same time, she started writing poems. Ironically, after a few years Alice Walker

⁹⁷ Perkins, Stephens, *Strange Fruit*. p. 7-8.

⁹⁸ Shuman Baird, Cavendish Marshall. *Great American Writers: Twentieth Century*, New York: Marshal Cavendish Corporation, 2002. p.1561.

⁹⁹ Shuman, Cavendish, *Great American Writers*. p. 1562.

¹⁰⁰ Fitzgerald Stephenie, *Alice Walker. Author and Social Activist*. Los Angeles: Compass Point Books, 2008.p. 14 .

¹⁰¹ Fitzgerald, *Alice Walker*. p. 15-16.

admitted, that this period of solitude caused that she became a writer.¹⁰² Fortunately, at the age of fourteen, her beloved brother Bill encountered a doctor, who performed an operation on her eye and partially removed the scar. For young Alice Walker it was like a beginning of her new life. "She went on to be voted most popular in her high school, and she was also crowned senior prom queen named valedictorian of her class."¹⁰³ She describes her feelings:

"Almost immediately I become a different person from the girl who does not raise her head. Or so I think. Now that I've raised my head I win the boyfriend of my dreams. Now that I've raised my head classwork comes from my lips as faultlessly as Easter speeches did, and I leave high school as valedictorian, most popular student, and queen, hardly believing my luck."¹⁰⁴

Inevitably, that traumatic experience reflected negatively in her school grades. However, after the operation she did well in a high school, it allowed her to get a scholarship and in a result go to Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. In this famous institution, which main aim was to educate young, talented black women, Walker started to take an active part in the civil rights movement. However, maintaining a demeanor of an activist was contradictory to Spelman College rules, where girls were prepared to be good Christians and wives, and behaving like ladies in every situations.¹⁰⁵

Her political and social participation caused that in 1964 she left Spelman College walls and went to Sarah Lawrence College in New York. There, she was mainly focused on her writing career. However, after the second year she went to Kenya, and then to Uganda in Africa as an exchange student. She worked there in pineapple fields and helped build school. Unfortunately, when she came back to the United States, it emerged that she was pregnant. It was such a problematic situation for her that she was even considering committing a suicide. Finally, she decided to have an illegal abortion. This decision allowed her to graduate from Sarah Lawrence College in 1966.¹⁰⁶

She married on March 17, 1967 with Melvyn Rosenman Leventhal, a white civil rights lawyer. The same year she also published her first piece of writing, a short story *To Hell with Dying*. Her marriage with Melvyn Leventhal produced one child. Their daughter Rebecca Grant Leventhal was born on November 17, 1969.

Her probably the most famous book was *The Color Purple* published for the first time in 1982 and later on, in 1989 filmed by Steven Spielberg. A year after the book publication, in 1983, she became the first black woman, who received The Pulitzer Prize for fiction, for *The Color Purple*. When the book was published, it was generally considered to be a masterpiece, especially among African Americans. Having read *The Color Purple*, Whoopi Goldberg was so fascinated and fetched by this book, that she sent a letter to Alice Walker with a request for a part, if the book would ever been made into film. Another American celebrity, Oprah Winfrey told: "I have never wanted anything in my life before or since as much as I wanted to be in *The Color Purple*."¹⁰⁷ Both of them had main roles in the film. Whoopi Goldberg played a part of Celie and Ophra Winfrey was a Sophia.

¹⁰² Shuman, Cavendish, *Great American Writers*. p. 1562.

¹⁰³ Lazo Caroline, *Alice Walker. Freedom Writer*, Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Company, 2000. p. 25-28.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted In: Donnelly Mary, *Writers and Their Works. Alice Walker. The Color Purple and the Other Works*. New York, Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2010. p.15.

¹⁰⁵ Donnelly, *Writers and Their Works. Alice Walker*. p. 22.

¹⁰⁶ Shuman, Cavendish, *Great American Writers*. p. 1573.

¹⁰⁷ Fitzgerald, *Alice Walker*. p. 10.

3.1.2. Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison was born on February 18, 1931 in Lorain, Ohio, and named by her parents as Chloe Anthony Wofford. When she was at college, she has changed her name into Toni, that is short for Anthony. Morrison is her married name.¹⁰⁸ Toni Morrison is one of the world's best-known and respected writers. She is very successful and prolific, her novels, that cover lives of African Americans are bestsellers. She has not only won numerous and important book awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, but was also the first African American woman who won a Nobel Prize for literature.¹⁰⁹

Similarly like Alice Walker, Toni Morrison's mother stimulated and inspired her children's imagination by telling them tales about ghost, powerful dreams or deceased relatives. Toni and her sister and two brothers were often listening many amazing and colorful stories told by their mother. Toni's great-grandparent were living in the South, so they were slaves. After the abolition of slavery, her grandparents moved to the North, hoping to find better and easier life there. However life of African Americans was severe and formidable even in the North, because of inequality and lynching. Toni's father, George Wofford, worked assiduously to earn the money for his family. His wife, Ramah Wofford, was a housewife and took care of their children.¹¹⁰

Although Toni Morrison's father sometimes held even three jobs at once, his family lived in poverty. What is more, Toni Morrison was growing up in the times of Great Depression, what caused that African Americans had great difficulties to find jobs and to earn enough to feed their families. What is more, they had to encounter growing anxieties, discriminations and lynching of white Americans toward blacks.¹¹¹ Her father firmly believed in the "moral superiority of African Americans"¹¹² What is more, he was very suspicious and hateful to whites. This negative attitude toward whites derived from persecutions and inequality, that George Wofford and most of African Americans encountered. Toni Morrison once said that she "grew up in a basically racist household with more than a child's share of contempt for white people".¹¹³ Toni's mother, by contrast to her husband, expected her children to be proud and self-confident, as well as to live in racial harmony. She believed in natural kindness of white people. This faith in whites was so strong, that she:

"wrote a letter to President Roosevelt to complain about a bug-ridden meal the family received while on relief, and because the meals improved, she was convinced that Roosevelt had personally responded to her message. She routinely walked down to the local movie theatre to make sure that the owners were not segregating blacks and whites."¹¹⁴

Toni and her siblings were growing up in Lorain, a small town, where a tight-knit community relations were cultivated. She and her brothers and sister were looked after by their neighbors. In addition to this, children were taught responsibility and respect towards their

¹⁰⁸ Haskins Jim, Haskins James, *Toni Morrison: Telling a Tale Untold*, Brookfield, Connecticut: Twenty-First Century Books, 2002. p 10.

¹⁰⁹ Watson Galadriel Findlay, *Great African American Women. Toni Morrison*, New York: Weigl Publisher INC, 2005. p. 5-6.

¹¹⁰ Watson. *Great African American Women*. p. 7.

¹¹¹ Watson, *Great African American Women*. p. 6.

¹¹² Li Stephanie, *Toni Morrison: A Biography*, Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009. p. 2.

¹¹³ Quoted in: Li, *Toni Morrison: A Biography*. p. 2.

¹¹⁴ Li, *Toni Morrisom: A Biography*. p. 4.

elders. The persistence and resilience of African American community is a theme, that has been often seen in Morrison's novels.¹¹⁵

Toni loved books and reading since she was a child. "In grade 1, she was the only child in her class who could read."¹¹⁶ However, when she was young she had not as much time for reading as she would like to have. Her father believed in work and did not like idleness. Thus, at the age of thirteen, Toni had to take a job after school to provide some money and help her family with expenses.¹¹⁷ She was a very good student at school and she graduated from Lorain High School with honors in 1949. The next step in her educational career was Howard University in Washington, D.C., where she studied English until 1953. This university was established in 1867 to educate newly freed slaves.¹¹⁸ Then she received MA degree from Cornell University. She also moved South and became an instructor in English at Texas Southern University, where she saw a differences and divisions between Southern and Northern part of the United States. In 1958 she married Harold Morrison, a Jamaican architect. In 1959 she returned to Howard to teach English for seven years.¹¹⁹ At that time she witnessed the beginnings of the civil rights movement:

"Those kids, the first who were sitting in – many of them were in my classes. I was very young then. My son was born in 1961, and I think I was a little diverted from it. I know I always seem to be into palaces backward. I was not in favor of integration. But I couldn't officially say that, because I knew the terror and the abuses of segregation. But integration also meant that we would not have a fine black college or fine black education."¹²⁰

In her novels, essays and lectures she directs attention to African American history, times of slavery, as well as early twentieth-century Harlem. Her novels, especially *Beloved* and *Jazz* are focused on specific historical moments. "Bearing witness to the past, Morrison's novels can also be seen as ceremonies of proper burial, an opportunity to put painful events of the past in a place where they no longer haunt successive generations."¹²¹ In other words, Morrison's novels may be regarded as historical novels. She has been a witness of the two-thirds of a twentieth century, who has seen fierce struggle of African Americans in civil rights movement and significant changes for African American women writers.

3.2. Creation of the world presented in the novels.

Both novels present the world differently and in the case of the two novels that are central for this work the situation of African Americans and African American women is no different. And yet, there is plenty of elements that are similar for both of them and that connect them with each other in many ways. The critics applauding opinions and the popularity of the books in almost every country in the world are just one of many aspects.

Alice Walker in *The Color Purple* and Toni Morrison in *Beloved* present deep insight into the black community in the United States, its utility and its colorful and vivid nature in the opposition to the fatality of its situation in the world of inequality, segregation, injustice and lack of understanding and communication between whites and blacks. In *Beloved*, the fictional

¹¹⁵ Li, *Toni Morrison: A Biography*. p. 6.

¹¹⁶ Watson, *Great African American Women*. p. 8.

¹¹⁷ Haskins, Haskins, *Toni Morrison: Telling a Tale Untold*. p 25.

¹¹⁸ Watson, *Great African American Women*. p. 9.

¹¹⁹ Peach Linden, *Toni Morrison*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998. p. 3.

¹²⁰ Matus Jill, *Toni Morrison*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998. p. 9.

¹²¹ Matus, *Toni Morrison*. p. 2.

characters and communities experience exploitation and marginalization in both slave and free-market societies. Alice Walker also presents race problems at the beginning of the twentieth century, however, she rather focuses more upon the relationships between men and women, than white and black. She concentrates on women's personal struggle for freedom in a brutal and violent society where women are looked upon as unimportant and even inferior.

3.3. Motherhood and family image

Beloved is a ghost story, that demonstrates effectively the influence of white-dominant culture over African American family life in the second half of the nineteenth century, so during the time, when the government of the United States was engaged in the project of reconstruction. Inevitably, the system of slavery, psychological and economic oppression, separation of members of families that black men and women experienced. "This matrix of racism, sexism and classism is registered in recurrent images of family violence, absent fathers, and women-centered black families that function without the presence or support of men."¹²²

The most astonishing and traumatic moment in *Beloved* is when Sethe, the main character in this novel, kills her two-year-old daughter, and does attempt to put to death the other three children before she is obstructed. Toni Morrison was inspired by a text that she read in a newspaper that covered a similar story. She recalls that:

"One was a newspaper clipping about a woman named Margaret Garner in 1851. It said that the Abolitionists did a great deal out of her case because she had escaped from Kentucky, I think, with her four children. She lived in a little neighborhood just outside of Cincinnati and she had killed her children. She succeeded in killing one; she tried to kill two others. She hit them in the head with a shovel and they were wounded, but they didn't die. And there was a smaller one that she had at her breast. She was a young woman. In the inked pictures of her she seemed a very quiet, very serene-looking woman and everyone who interviewed her remarked about her serenity and tranquility. She said, "I will not let those live how I lived." She had run off into a little woodshed right outside her house to kill them because she had been caught as a fugitive. And she had made up her mind that they would not suffer the way she had and it was better for them to die. And her mother-in-law was in the house at the same time and she said, "I watched her and I neither encouraged her nor discouraged her." They put her in a jail for a while and I'm not even sure what the denouement is of her story."¹²³

The main character, Sethe, is the fictionalized Margaret Garner. This is the fact, that act of killing children by their own mother is ignominious and inexcusable, however, Morrison yields the terrifying moment together with convincing reason and elucidation. The main character does kill her little daughter and she was trying to kill three other, but she was just attempting to find a place for them "where no one could hurt them ... where they would be safe."¹²⁴ To my mind, Morrison was trying to outline the situation and feelings of thousands of slave women who lived in times, when mothering was not a private act, independent of the

¹²² Heller Dana, "Reconstructing Kin: Family, History, and Narrative in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", *College Literature*, Vol. 21, No. 2, June, 1994. p. 106.

¹²³ Furman Jan, *Toni Morrison's Fiction*, Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1999. p. 68.

¹²⁴ Morrison Toni, *Beloved*, New York: Penguin Group, 1997. p. 89.

economic, political or social conditions which should affect the circumstances of parenting. Those were Sethe's children and she was convinced that she, as a mother, is the only person who own the right to decide about their lives and future. She just wished for freedom for her beloved children and killing them was the only way to set them free.

Sethe's childhood is also stirring and could have an impact on her future demeanor. She was born in slavery, and like many other children like her, she did not know her mother. She was raised by plantation's wet nurse. She was not allowed to see her mother, cuddle her or even talk to her. What is more, she witnessed her mother being hanged. By contrast, at Kentucky plantation known as Sweet Home Sethe's children were growing up with their mother and father, in warmth and safety. She could take care of them and create for them a loving and stable home. However, when Garner, the previous owner dies and Schoolteacher, a new sadistic owner of the plantation, takes the Sweet Home over, the circumstances changed and the violent reality of slavery regressed. Since than, Sethe, her husband and their children were somebody's properties and her children no longer belong to her. They are considered by their new owner as subjects or animals that may be traded, beaten or raped and forced to arduous labor. Those dire circumstances dictate them to escape. And they succeed. After sending her three children to safety, pregnant Sethe escapes. However, she is earlier lynched by the Schoolteacher and his nephews. Pregnant, beaten, whipped, bleeding and exhausted, with no food or water, she struggles to reach Ohio, where her children were waiting for her at her mother-in-law's house, Baby Suggs. During her arduous way home she gives birth to a daughter and arrives to her new home with a new infant. As a free and safe woman she nurses her children and knows that her love is:

“good and right ... and when I stretched out my arms all my children could get in between. I was that wide. Look like I loved em more after I got here. Or maybe I couldn't love em proper in Kentucky because they wasn't mine to love.”¹²⁵

Safety and happiness engulfed her. Finally, she feels that she could be safe with her four children, her mother-in-law and African American community. After a couple of days, when the Schoolteacher with his bully nephews and the sheriff enter Baby Suggs' property, Sethe do not accede. She carries her children to the woodshed, and in desperation is trying to put them somewhere they would be safe – she attempts to kill them. She succeed with only one child, her daughter, who she cuts throat. Rest of her children survive this act of their mother's desperation.

For Sethe, her children are the best thing she has ever had. The passionate desire to protect them was so obsessive, that she makes an attempt to put them to death. Whites, oppressors could abuse and rape her, dirty her body and soul, but not her children, the best and the purest part of her.¹²⁶

When Baby Suggs dies and Sethe's two sons run away, she stays alone with her daughter Denver. Those two women are also rejected by the community, in which judgment Sethe committed too brutal and inexcusable crime. The house becomes haunted with the angry spirit of the baby girl killed by her mother and deprived of a chance to be loved.

Sethe and Denver continue to live alone, together with the ghost, until the day when Paul D, a former slave from Sweet Home arrives after eighteen years to Sethe's home. Paul D

¹²⁵ Morrison, *Beloved*. p. 90.

¹²⁶ Koolish Lynda, “‘To Be Loved and Cry Shame’: A Psychological Reading of Toni Morrison's ‘Beloved’”, *African American Literature*, Vol. 26, No. 4, Winter, 2001. p. 178.

changes Sethe and Denver's lives by warding the spirit off. One day, when they return from the local carnival, they see a young girl in front of their house. When questioned about her personalities, she gives only her name, which is Beloved. Although it seems that she has no memory or identity, Sethe and Denver take care of Beloved. Gradually and astonishingly, the new young girl starts recalling memories and details from the past which only a member of their family would be able to know about.

There are two questions that appear together with Beloved's arrival: first, is she a ghost of Sethe's murdered child in human form? And Second, what was the reason, the murdered baby girl returned, and what does she wants? According to Dana Heller, "Beloved represents the family as well as the familial. She is as much the family Sethe, Denver, and Paul D have lost as she is all the families separated and dismembered under the slavery system. And the reason she comes back is the same as the reason that this novel had to be written: in order to understand."¹²⁷ Beloved remains the past, that Sethe has still in her mind.

3.4. Rape archetypes

The Color Purple starts with striking words written in italics: "You'd better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy."¹²⁸ These words are articulated by a bully stepfather, with a view to silencing young Celie, because he rapes her. Even the rape, which Celie describes, also clearly depicts silencing:

"He never had a kin word to say to me. Just say You gonna do what your mammy wouldn't. First he put his thing up gainst my hip and sort of wiggle it around. Then he push his thing inside my pussy. When that hurt, I cry. He start to choke me, saying You better shut up and git used to it."¹²⁹

She has nobody to tell about her traumatic experiences, thus she starts writing letters to God. What is more, she confides those traumatic experiences to God, because they are extremely shameful to her. Charles L. Proudfit directs attention to the fact, that woman and child victims of rape often blame themselves for those experiences or even are certain that they deserve for it because were not good enough. She begins her letters with those words below, however Walker puts a line on the words "I am", because Celie believes that after that what has happened to her she is no longer a good girl¹³⁰:

"Dear God,
I am fourteen years old. I am I have always been a good girl. Maybe you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me."¹³¹

That thing that is happening to young Celie, main character in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, is that the bully man she believes to be her father is raping her. He does it because Celie's mother is too ill to have sex with him. Celie has two children with him, however he gets rid of them very quickly.

¹²⁷ Dana Heller, *Reconstructing Kin*. p. 108.

¹²⁸ Walker Alice, *The Color Purple*, New York: Pocket Books, 1982. p.1.

¹²⁹ Walker, *The Color Purple*. p. 1.

¹³⁰ Proudfit Charles, "Celie's Search for Identity: A Psychoanalytic Developmental Reading of Alice Walker's 'The Color Purple'", *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Spring, 1991. p. 17.

¹³¹ Alice Walker. *The Color Purple*. p. 1.

After some time Celie's father loses interest in her and begins disturbing her younger sister Nettie. However, Celie attempts to protect her beloved younger sister from misery she suffered from and will never forget. One day, a widower with four children comes to their house to ask for permission to marry Nettie. It is a perfect situation for their father, because he has got a chance to get rid of Celie, and he forces her to marry Mr. _____. Celie's husband is as abusive as her father was and he also rapes her. Barbara Smith depicts that Alice Walker, by changing location of Celie's inferno, marks how little is difference between abused daughter and abused wife. She also adds, that: "Walker does not back step from the reality that the mistreatment of women is often entrenched in Afro-American culture, that there are indeed shared values in the race about that mistreatment."¹³²

In a subsequent letter, Celie writes to God, that her father beat her, because she looked at a man in church. She explains to God, that she does not wink at men, she winks at women because she is not afraid of them.

Pamela E. Barnett divulges that "the book [*Beloved*] is haunted by rape not to punish idly on the ghostly presence that names the book but to establish the link between haunting and rape that invigorates the novel's dominant trope: the succubus figure."¹³³ Succubus figure is a female evil spirit, supposed to have sex with a sleeping man. Moreover, succubus figure may be comparable to the vampire or shape-shifting witches from African American folklore, who attack their victims at night. Both of those demons, as well as succubus figure, sexually assault their victims and drain from them vital fluid. *Beloved* is remarkably similar to those evils. She gets stronger by compelling her victims to recover their deepest and the most traumatic memories and feeding those thoughts off. However,

"Beloved functions as more than the receptacle of remembered stories; she reenacts sexual violation and thus figures the persistent nightmares common to survivors of trauma. Her insistent manifestation constitutes a challenge for the characters who have survived rapes inflicted while they were enslaved: directly, and finally communally, to confront a past they cannot forget."¹³⁴

The reason Toni Morrison combines *Beloved* with succumb devil is to expose the effects of rape under the system of slavery, that was so common and even institutionalized. The succumb, that comes under the cover of night and rapes is a perfect metaphor of physical abuse and sexual exploitation of African Americans in reproductive purpose. "Just as rape was used to dehumanize enslaved person, the succubus or vampire's assault robs victims of vitality, both physical and psychological."¹³⁵ In addition to this, Morrison uses Paul D as a victim of *Beloved*'s rape to portray not only African American women, but the whole slave society as a subject of rape and sexual domination of Whites.¹³⁶

According to Lynda Koolish, however, *Beloved* is a symbol of a horror of sexual assault of children living in a system of slavery. "Beloved who cannot differentiate her face from another's, who repeatedly murmurs 'I am not dead... I see her face which is mine... she is my face smiling at me,' breaks into pieces, splits off, dissociates, becomes a nineteenth-century African American Sybil, a multiple personality whose childhood is maimed by the man who

¹³² Smith Barbara, "Sexual Oppression Unmasked", "Callaloo", No. 22, Autumn, 1984. p. 171.

¹³³ Burnett Pamela, "Figurations of Rape and the Super Natural in *Beloved*", *Modern Language Association*, Vol. 112, No. 3, May, 1997. p. 418.

¹³⁴ Burnett. *Figurations of Rape and the Super Natural in Beloved*. p. 418-419.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

sexually enters her, who 'puts his finger there,' who 'hurts where [she] sleep[s]'.¹³⁷ Her thoughts and feelings are also the memories of all African American children and women who were raped and physically abused by their masters, their oppressors.

3.5. Searching for own identity

Beloved is a innovative portrait of a woman haunted by her traumatic experiences from the past connected with slavery. "Sethe's confrontation with her own feelings of abandonment and 'mother-lack' develops Morrison's indictment of slavery as an institution devoted to distorting and truncating maternal subjectivity."¹³⁸ According to Jan Furman, "Sethe, like her mother, Baby Suggs, and all slave women, can never be wife and mother."¹³⁹ She is biologically a woman and her duty is to bread her children. Schoolteacher together with his nephews humiliated Sethe by comparing her to an animal. They prepared a list of Sethe's characteristics connected with animals. The Schoolteacher, and most of other slave owners, treated and considered African American women as "no more than a cow or goat subject to "milking" like any other beast."¹⁴⁰ However, Sethe counteracts against those nonhuman treatments and resemblances to animals. She proves to herself that she is a creature capable of thinking and has the right to decide about her children's and her own fates.¹⁴¹

Sethe is a very proud, tough and determined woman. Even at Sweat Home, as a slave woman, she acts alone without nobody's help and support, and prepares her children to escape. She does the same a week later when she is absolutely convinced about her children's safety. Toni Morrison highlights Sethe's solitude by reviling what had happened to the men living at Sweat Home, who were supposed to protect her and her children and together with them gain freedom. Paul had been sold, two other men were killed, Six-O was burned alive, Paul D, who found Sethe eighteen years later, was locked in the barn with a bit in his mouth. And Halle, Sethe's husband and father of her children, was simply unable and powerless to protect his wife from violent nephews who were abusing her and drinking milk from her breasts. He ends up with his face in the butter.¹⁴² She is left alone, however, she finds in herself enough strength to cope with racism and sexual violence that she encounters.

Alice Walker is as much concerned about freedom for the spirit as she is about freedom from violence and rape. Some of her women characters are never able to be themselves, because they either live in the world of abusive men or are directly under their control. Their situation sometimes takes them away from their families and friends, they feel abandoned in their cruel reality. However, on the basis of Celie's transformation, Walker teaches the readers that a woman must find her inner strength, imitating those black women in the past who, even in slavery, would not allow their creativity to be dampened and controlled or their souls and bodies to be violated.

A turning point in Celie's lonely and full of violence life comes, when Shug Avery, a beautiful, independent and successful blues singer, who has been Albert's (Mr. _____'s name, that Celie did not use) lover for many years. At the beginning, Shug is jealous of Celie and even rude to her, however, soon they become friends and even lovers. Celie is fascinated with Shug. When she divulges to Shug, that Mr. _____ is bully and beats her, Shug is trying to protect her.

¹³⁷ Koolish, "To Be Loved and Cry Shame". p. 176.

¹³⁸ Matus, *Toni Morrison*. p. 109.

¹³⁹ Furman Jan, *Toni Morrison's Fiction*, Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1999. p. 74.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Furman, *Toni Morrison's Fiction*. p. 74.

She Helps Celie to find an inner strength and self-confidence. What's more, she teaches her how to conceive of the world as a beautiful place and how to love everything that surrounds her. In one of the letters to her sister Nattie, Celie quotes her conversation with Shug:

“She say, My first step from the old white man [God] was trees. Then air. Then birds. Then other people. But one day when I sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to me: that feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all. I knew that if I cut a tree, my arm would bleed. And I laughed and I cried and I run all around the house. I knew just what it was. In fact, when it happen, you can't miss it. It sort of like you know what, she say, grinning and rubbing high up on my thigh.

Shug! Isay.

Oh, she say. God love all them feelings. That's some of the best stuff God did. And when you know God loves'em you enjoys'em a lot more. You can Just relax, go with everything that's going, and praise God by liking what you like. God don't think it dirty? I ast.

Naw, she say. God made it. Listen, God love everything you love? and a mess of stuff you don't. But more than anything else, God love admiration.

You saying God vain? I ast.

Naw, she say. Not Vain, just wanting to share a good thing. I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it.”¹⁴³

According to Marcellus Blount, Shug Avory is a sort of “the color purple in the field” for Celie, a somebody important, who teaches her what it really means to be alive, who helps her to become fearless, independent and proud of herself. What is more, Shug facilitates Celie's ability to discover not only a natural beauty, but also sexuality in herself.¹⁴⁴

CONCLUSIONS

The institution of slavery is as old as civilization. Numerous nations and empires were created by the muscles of slaves. Philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists and historians have provided study how human as a property specified the character of a slave system, personality of the slaves and relationships between slaveholders and their labor and gave slavery a meaning that surpassed history.

The history of African Americans is rich in beauty, but also in tragedy and trauma. The unique character of extreme forms of physical exploitation very often led to humiliation or even death. However, studying the history of slavery and the history of African American women, or any other human history, one should consider not only things that were done to them, but also circumstances they created for themselves.

Conditions on plantations were extremely difficult and inhuman. Poor portions of food, exhausting and tremendous work from morning till night, diseases, cruel slave masters, all those adverse circumstances forced slaves to try different forms of resistance. One of them were attempts of escape, which were perceptible especially between American Revolution and the Civil War and known as the Underground Railroad.

¹⁴³ Walker, *The Color Purple*. p. 114.

¹⁴⁴ Blount Marcellus, “A Woman Speaks”, *Callaloo*, No. 18, Spring – Summer, 1983. p. 118.

African Americans were inevitably part of American history. They were not only slaves used as labour, but also took an active part in important historical events and had an influence on bygone days. Fighting in American revolution, they wanted to show, that they are also part of the American society. There is also a clear connection between fighting for abolition of slavery and grounds for American Civil War.

This part of American history is extremely important for slaves. It gave them an opportunity of gaining freedom. In addition to this, not only African Americans were fighting for their rights and equality. American Civil War was also the beginning of Civil and Women's Rights Movement. To sum up, African Americans exerted significant influence on shaping political and social life and culture in the United States.

Alice Walker has once said: "The animals of the world exist for their own reasons. They were not made for humans any more than black people were made for white, or women created for men."¹⁴⁵ In view of those words, some stereotypes that derive not only from slavery period, but also from race or gender, should not have any influence on African American women's social position, family role and employment and the way they are perceived by the rest of the society. Karen Russell, the daughter of a famous basketball player Bill Russell, explains how racial stereotypes affect her nowadays:

"How am I supposed to react to well-meaning, good, liberal white people who say things like: 'You know, Karen, I don't understand what all the fuss is about. You're one of my good friends, and I never think of you as black.' Implicit in such a remark is, 'I think of you as white,' or perhaps just, 'I don't think of your race at all',"¹⁴⁶

It is a fact, that history of African American women is full of sadism and intolerance. Hard life on plantations, sexual exploitation and overwhelming violence had profoundly influenced their families, children, husbands or even their sexual lives. What is more, intolerance, violence and physical abuse that derives from slavery existed even after emancipation. African American women succeeded in freeing themselves from cruelty and violence of their white masters, however, they were still slaves in their free homes. They were slaves of their black husbands who were often very abusive and violent. Toni Morrison and Alice Walker deal with this problem in their novels.

Persecutions, inequality and violence pervade fundamental parts of two presented novels: Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, as well as it pervaded the ordinary African American women's lives. Most of female characters presented in the novels were hunted by their traumatic experiences from the past. To my mind, racism may also be considered as a trauma from the past, that holds African American women from getting the real freedom and their vain efforts to fight for their equal rights.

References

[1] Bailey Frankie, Green Alice, "*Low never here*": a Social History of African American Responses to Issues of Crime and Justice, Westport: Praeger Publisher, 1999.

¹⁴⁵ Johnson Lewis Jone, *Women's History – Article*, <<http://womenshistory.about.com/od/quotes/a/?once=true&>>, (4 September 2010).

¹⁴⁶ Collins. *Black Feminist Thought*. p. 87.

- [2] Barr Alwyn, *Black Texans: a history of African Americans In Texas, 1528-1995*, Austin, Texas: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996.
- [3] Berlin Ira, *Many thousands gone: the first two centuries of slavery in North America*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000.
- [4] Buell Tonya, *Slavery In America: A Primary Sources History of the Intolerable Practice of Slavery*, New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., 2004.
- [5] Burgess Norma, Brown Eurnestine, *African-American Women: an Ecological Perspective*, New York: Falmer Press, 2000.
- [6] Donnelly Mary. *Writers and Their Works. Alice Walker. The Color Purple and the Other Works*. New York, Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2010.
- [7] Findlay Watson Galadriel, *Great African American Women. Toni Morrison*, New York: Weigl Publisher INC, 2005.
- [8] Fitzgerald Stephenie, *Alice Walker. Author and Social Activist*. Los Angeles: Compass Point Books, 2008.
- [9] Furman Jan, *Toni Morrison's Fiction*, Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1999.
- [10] Halperin Earle Jonathan, *The Routledge Atlas of African American history*, New York: Routledge, 2000.
- [11] Haskins Jim, Haskins James, *Toni Morrison: Telling a Tale Untold*, Brookfield, Connecticut: Twenty-First Century Books, 2002.
- [12] Heuman Gad, Walvin James, *The Slavery Reader*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- [13] Hill Collins Patricia, *Black Feminist Thought. Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- [14] Hine Darlene, Thompson Kathleen, *A Shining Thread of Hope. The History of Black Women in America*, New York: Broadway Books, 1998.
- [15] Horton James, *Landmarks of African American History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- [16] Jenkins Wilbert, *Climbing up to Glory: a Short History of African Americans During the Civil War and Reconstruction*, Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc. 2002.
- [17] Jones Jacqueline, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow. Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present*, New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers. 1985.

[18] Landau Elanie, *Fleming to Freedom on the Underground Railroad: the Courageous Slaves, Agents, and Conductors*, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Twenty-First Century Books, 2006.

[19] Lazo Caroline, *Alice Walker. Freedom Writer*, Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Company, 2000.

[20] Li Stephanie, *Toni Morrison: A Biography*, Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009.

[21] Matus Jill, *Toni Morrison*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998.

[22] McCray Carrie, *The Black Woman and Family Roles*, [w:] La Frances Rodgers-Rose (red), *The Black Woman*, London, Sage Publications, 1980.

[23] Morrison Toni, *Beloved*, New York: Penguin Group, 1997.

[24] Nell Irvin Painter, *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and its Meanings, 1619 to the Present*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

[25] Olwell Robert, *Masters, slaves, and subjects: the culture of Power In the South Karolina Low Country, 1740-1790*. New York, Cornell University Press, 1998.

[26] Peach Linden, *Toni Morrison*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998.

[27] Perkins Kathy, Stephens Judith, *Strange Fruit. Plays on Lynching by American Women*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998.

[28] Robin Kelly, Lewis Earl, *To Make our World Anew. A History of African Americans to 1880*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

[30] Shuman Baird, Cavendish Marshall. *Great American Writers: Twentieth Century*, New York: Marshal Cavendish Corporation, 2002.

[31] Walker Alice, *The Color Purple*, New York: Pocket Books, 1982.

[32] Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: a History*. Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1998.

[33] Zinn Howard, *A People's History of the United States: 1492-present*, Harlow: Person Education Limited, 2003.

[34] Heller Dana, "Reconstructing Kin: Family, History, and Narrative in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", *College Literature*, Vol. 21, No. 2, June, 1994.

[35] Koolish Lynda, "'To Be Loved and Cry Shame': A Psychological Reading of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", *African American Literature*, Vol. 26, No. 4, Winter, 2001.

[36] Burnett Pamela, "Figurations of Rape and the Super Natural in *Beloved*", *Modern Language Association*, Vol. 112, No. 3, May, 1997.

- [37] Smith Barbara, “Sexual Oppression Unmasked”, “Callaloo”, No. 22, Autumn, 1984.
- [38] Blount Marcellus, “A Woman Speaks”, *Callaloo*, No. 18, Spring – Summer, 1983.
- [39] Proudfit Charles, “Celie’s Search for Identity: A Psychoanalytic Developmental Reading of Alice Walker’s ‘The Color Purple’”, *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 32, No. 1, Spring, 1991.
- [40] Airhinenbuwa Collins, King Gary, *African Americans*, <<http://www.enotes.com/public-health-encyclopedia/african-americans>>, (5 April 2010).
- [41] Donovan Kenneth, *DaCosta 400. Slaves in Cape Breton 1713-1815*, <<http://www.dacosta400.ca/cavalcade/slaverycb.shtml>>, (17 May 2010).
- [42] Scars of a whipped man, 2 April 1863, author unknown, <<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f6/Whippedslaveedit.jpg>>, (2 May 2010).
- [43] Wilentz Sean, *Africans in America. David Walker’s Appeal*, <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2931t.html>>, (10 June 2010).
- [44] *The United States Constitution*, <<http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html#Am13>>, (28 July 2010).
- [45] *The United States Constitution*, <<http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html#Am14>>, (28 July 2010).
- [46] *The United States Constitution*, <<http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html#Am15>>, (28 July 2010).
- [47] Richardson Marilyn, *Maria W. Stewart: Biohraphy from Answers.com*, <<http://www.answers.com/topic/maria-w-stewart>>, (25 August 2010).
- [48] Johnson Lewis Jone, *Women’s History – Article*, <<http://womenshistory.about.com/od/quotes/a/?once=true&>>, (4 September 2010).

(Received 24 January 2015; accepted 16 February 2015)