

Summer 2016

# Critical Exploration of the Neo-Slave Narrative in Selected Walker and Morrison Novels

Meisha M. Edwards-White  
*Governors State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://opus.govst.edu/theses>

 Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#), and the [Literature in English, North America, Ethnic and Cultural Minority Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Edwards-White, Meisha M., "Critical Exploration of the Neo-Slave Narrative in Selected Walker and Morrison Novels" (2016). *All Student Theses*. 83.  
<http://opus.govst.edu/theses/83>

For more information about the academic degree, extended learning, and certificate programs of Governors State University, go to [http://www.govst.edu/Academics/Degree\\_Programs\\_and\\_Certifications/](http://www.govst.edu/Academics/Degree_Programs_and_Certifications/)

Visit the [Governors State English Department](#)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses at OPUS Open Portal to University Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Student Theses by an authorized administrator of OPUS Open Portal to University Scholarship. For more information, please contact [opus@govst.edu](mailto:opus@govst.edu).

**Critical Exploration of the Neo-Slave Narrative in Selected  
Walker and Morrison Novels**

By

**Meisha M. Edwards-White**

**B.A., Chicago State University, 2012**

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Masters of Arts,

With a Major in English

Governors State University

University Park, IL 60466

2016

Meisha M. Edwards-White

Copyright August 2016

## Acknowledgements

First of all, I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for this major accomplishment, for without Him, none of this would be possible. All things are possible through the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Secondly, I want to give Special Thanks to my Amazing Parents, Charles Raymond Boykins (Heaven) and Linda R. Edwards for all of the wisdom and encouragement that you have imparted into me throughout my life. I Love You Dad and Mom. I also want to give a Wonderful thanks to my husband John W. White Jr. for all of your prayers, patience and support. Love You! In addition, I want to thank all of my family members and special friends. Thank You for everything. Furthermore, I want to give Special Thanks to my Spiritual Parents, Apostle H. Daniel Wilson and Pastor Beverly L. Wilson for all of your prayers and encouragement. I Love You Apostle Dad and Pastor Mom. Special Shout Out To My Family, The Prophets!! I Love You So Much!!

Thirdly, I want to thank all of my wonderful professors and Advisor Janet Halpin from Chicago State University. I also want to thank all of my wonderful professors from Governors State University. Special Thanks to my Advisor, Dr. Rashidah J. Muhammad. Thank you all for your wisdom, teachings and impartations into my life throughout my amazing academia journey.

Finally, To God Be The Glory for the things He has done in my life. I can do all things through Jesus Christ which strengthens me. Phil. 4:13.

## Table of Contents

Title Page.....	
Copyright.....	
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
Chapter II: Neo-Slave Narratives within Selected Works of Walker & Morrison	
Part I: The Empowered African American Women.....	9
Part II: Surviving the Atrocities of Slavery.....	31
Chapter III: Biographies and Literary Influences of Alice Walker and Toni Morrison	
Part I: Literary Influences of Walker and Purpose of Neo-Slave Narratives.....	50
Part II: Literary Influences of Morrison and Purpose of Neo-Slave Narrative	
Chapter IV: Reflections/ Implications.....	62
Works Cited.....	69
Annotated Bibliography.....	78

## Abstract

This study examines Alice Walker's *The Colored Purple* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as Neo-Slave Narratives. These extraordinary authors reveal slave history in their novels. Although these novels deal with neo-slave narratives, they closely identify with history of African American enslavement. Walker and Morrison express through their works the many ways African American women lived in bondage during slavery. Their characters speak volumes to the mis-treatment of African Americans.

Neo-Slave Narratives are contemporary works of fiction. Walker and Morrison have chosen to illustrate the horrors of slavery as it relates to African Americans. The novelists demonstrate the realities of slavery in America through the portrayals of their characters. Walker and Morrison's novels depict the dehumanizing experiences African Americans suffered from their slave owners as well as family members. Walker's main characters are two sisters, Celie and Nettie, who endure sexism and racism as if they are enslaved by white slave masters. Their slavery stems from male dominance by their step-father. Celie also suffers at the hands of her abusive husband. Morrison's protagonist Sethe, in *Beloved*, is born a slave and escapes but yet eighteen years later she is still not free because of the psychological effects that stem from slavery. As a result, her mind is damaged and she lives in and out of reality.

The major point of my research explores the purpose of the authors' usage of Neo-Slave Narratives in their fictional literary novels *The Color Purple* and *Beloved*. These prolific authors have a purpose for all of their literary works rather it is loosely based on someone's life or an event from the past. According to author and critic, Bernard Bell, Neo-Slave Narratives are, "residually oral, modern narratives of escape

from bondage to freedom” (289). Bell’s definition describes characters within a text that escape to freedom that were once in servitude. As I define what a “Neo-Slave Narrative” is, it is also important to define “Slave Narrative” as they are closely related. According to Henry Louis Gates, Jr, “The slave narrative is a unique creation in the long history of human bondage, designed by a small but exceptionally gifted group of men and women who escaped and who went on to write books about the severe conditions of their bondage” (xi). Gates describes how former slaves wrote books about their life of enslavement by the slave master.

## Chapter I: Introduction and Definition of Neo-Slave Narratives

African Americans suffered through the trials and tribulations of slavery for almost four hundred years. The Emancipation Proclamation Act of 1863 abolished slavery, but many African Americans still suffered from racial injustices related to slavery. Literary authors Alice Walker and Toni Morrison explore the effects of slavery through their Neo-Slave Narrative writings within *The Color Purple* and *Beloved*. Walker and Morrison also expose the atrocities of slavery through their Neo-Slave Narratives because the history of African American people has been hidden too long. Although the Emancipation Proclamation Act of 1863 abolishes slavery, African Americans still suffer from the psychological, economical and social effects of slavery as Alice Walker and Toni Morrison's Neo-Slave Narratives expose the plight of slavery through the female experience.

Authors, Walker and Morrison highlight the message of slavery in their work to release historical experiences of African Americans. Neo-Slave Narratives are fictional accounts of slavery; they depict historical tales of enslavement from African Americans (Ashraf Rushdy 3). Walker and Morrison through their Narratives expose the life experiences from a culture of people. By exposing the experiences, Morrison and Walker provide forums for the history of African Americans to live on throughout the centuries to educate people of the unknown accounts of slavery.

Literary authors and critics Bernard Bell and Ashraf H.A. Rushdy define the term Neo-Slave Narratives. Literary critic Sofia Munoz-Valdivieso provides insight on the formation of the term "Neo-Slave Narrative." She states, " Bernard Bell created the term

'neoslave narratives' to refer to the fictions about slavery that began to appear in the US in the sixties and seventies and he defined them as "residually oral, modern narratives of escape from bondage to freedom" (Munoz-Valdivieso 43). In other words, authors began to share the slave narrative experiences through their characters in their literary works. As I discuss the term "Neo-Slave Narrative," it is imperative to know its formation into our culture. Munoz-Valdivieso shares the history of African Americans as it relates to slavery and their determination to be free even in the twentieth century. According to Munoz-Valdivieso, Bell refers to the mindset of African Americans as they struggled to release the atrocious memories of their past.

Ashraf H.A. Rushdy also describes Neo-Slave Narratives. Rushdy declares, "What I call "Neo-slave narratives," that is, contemporary novels that assume the form, adopt the conventions, and take on the first-person voice of the antebellum slave narrative" (3). In other words, Rushdy is focusing on one form of contemporary slavery. There are contemporary novels that share the stories of the pre-Civil War period concerning slavery. Rushdy writes,

I am able to explore in some detail the social logic of the literary form of Neo-slave narrative: its origins in the social, intellectual, and racial formations of the sixties, its cultural politics as these texts intervene in debates over the significance of race, and its literary politics as these texts make statements on engagements between texts and between mainstream and minority traditions. After delineating the social conditions within which the specific literary form of the Neo-slave narrative emerged by analyzing the political and academic debates of the late sixties regarding

the cultural politics...The authors of the Neo-slave narratives of the seventies and eighties are concerned with the politics of the sixties for several reasons...The Neo-slave narratives are also engaged in the sixties because that decade saw the formation of a contemporary discourse of slavery...The Neo-slave Narratives make sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit comments about white appropriations of the slave's voice and challenge white authors who attempt to contain and regulate the first-person representation of fugitive slaves. (Rushdy 3-6)

Rushdy discusses the different forms of the narratives and what it involves. The narratives deal with cultural and literary politics. Rushdy discusses the input of the white authors and their viewpoint of the narratives. Rushdy further examines the significance of race as it relates to the written texts.

Munoz-Valdivieso further shares Rushdy's definition of Neo-Slave Narratives in her article "Neo-Slave Narratives in Contemporary Black British Fiction." She contended that, "In this more specific use, "neo-slave narratives" are particular kinds of slavery fiction, those that recreate the first-person narrator of the original texts written (or dictated) by the former slaves themselves" (43). Munoz-Valdivieso shares that the Neo-Slave Narratives are recreated stories from former slaves sharing their life experiences in written text form. She notes that the authors take the real life stories of former slaves and use them in their novels with fictitious characters and narrators. The first-person narrators are the former slaves telling their own life stories as they relate to slavery. Bell defines "Neo-Slave Narratives" as the fictions of slavery and the impact of going from bondage

to freedom, while Rushdy defines it as a particular kind of slavery fiction stemming from the tales of former slaves written in first-person narration.

In addition to the descriptions already submitted, literary critic Valerie Smith writes in an article on Neo-Slave Narratives,

The institution of slavery in the United States was a site of unimaginable, physical, emotional, and spiritual cruelty, justified by greed and racism, and sanctioned by religion, philosophy, and the law. Written into the nation's founding documents, its very existence betrayed the contradictions at the heart of national identity and consciousness...Most accounts of the neo-slave narrative as a genre begin with Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* (1966), a magisterial historical novel which draws on Walker's meticulous research to extend the reach of her grandmother's stories of her life in slavery and freedom...The neo-slave narratives published during the latter decades of the twentieth century represent slavery from a variety of perspectives and with a broad range of emphases. (Smith 168-172)

Smith is sharing historical information about slavery. She also gives an account of when the narrative begins. She further reveals the neo-slave narratives in the twentieth century. Slave masters used the aspects of religion, law and philosophy to justify their horrific treatment of the slaves. The very ethics of slavery betrayed the human condition of African Americans. Smith further describes how unthinkable and horrific slavery was in the United States.

After defining the term “Neo-Slave Narratives”, it leads me into chapter two of my thesis where I explore the Neo-Slave Narratives that are written in the selected works from Alice Walker and Toni Morrison. Walker exposes the abusiveness of women as the catalyst for her Neo-Slave Narratives. Celie, Walker’s protagonist, writes a letter to God saying, “First he put his thing up against my hip and sort of wiggle it around. Then he grabs my titties. Then he pushes 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” (Walker 1). Unfortunately, what Celie experiences here, is a normal account of slavery between a slave master and an African American. Alphonso, the step-father of Celie, rapes and impregnates her twice while her mother lies on her death bed. Furthermore, Celie is given away to an abusive husband who treats her like a slave. Mr. \_\_\_, Celie’s husband, beats on her for no apparent reason. For over four hundred years, African Americans suffered abuse from the white slave masters, and Walker within her novel shares a tale of African Americans suffering at the hands of other African Americans.

Within *Beloved*, Morrison’s protagonist Sethe is enslaved on a Kentucky plantation named “Sweet Home” with her husband and children. The slaves plan an escape where Sethe sends her children up north. With the male slaves, some escape and a few are captured and brought back to the Garner plantation. Sethe plans to kill her three children to prevent them from being returned to slavery on the Garner plantation. She kills her daughter and is still haunted by the memories of her daughter’s death some eighteen years later as she is raising her second daughter Denver. The Neo-Slave Narratives within the novel exposes the livelihood of the slaves on and off the “Sweet Home” plantation.

Morrison's uses the life story of Margaret Garner, a former slave woman, as the Neo-Slave Narrative in her novel *Beloved*.

Literary critic Valerie Smith discusses in her article "Neo-Slave Narratives," the comparison between Morrison's *Beloved* and the actual account of former slave Margaret Garner's life. Valerie Smith says, "Although *Beloved* is based on a real-life incident, Morrison deliberately altered the original account for strategic purposes. Her protagonist left her husband in slavery, escaped to freedom, and remained free with her living children" (174). Smith also mentions, "Margaret Garner escaped with her husband and two other men and was returned to slavery" (174). In reference to this statement, Smith is describing the differences between *Beloved* and the accounts of Garner's life as it relates to her enslavement, freedom and recapture. Although Neo-Slave Narratives are historical fictional accounts of slavery, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is based on a true story, but she strategically changes the outcomes between protagonist Sethe from *Beloved* and the real Margaret Garner. Sethe the protagonist sends her children up north to her mother-in-law's house to escape the confines of slavery in the south. After being whipped severely, Sethe escapes to the North as well leaving behind her husband. In an interview with Marsha Dowling, Morrison says, "the process of writing the book required her to supplement historical research with the resources of the imagination; only then could she get at the story of the infanticide of a slave child from the child's perspective" (Smith 174). Although Morrison's *Beloved* is based on the life of Margaret Garner, she changed a part of the story to leave room for her own imagination to run wild with a different ending. Morrison is known for her vivid imagination within her literary novels.

As I conclude with the Neo-Slave Narrative examples in chapter two, it leads to chapter three in which I will discuss the authors' biographies and explore the influences on their works. I will further discuss the significance of Morrison and Walker's writing concerning Neo-Slave Narratives. After sharing the influences and biographies in chapter three of authors Walker and Morrison; I will share the reflections and implications of my thesis concerning the critical exploration of Neo-Slave Narratives. Within the novels *The Color Purple* and *Beloved*, authors Walker and Morrison demonstrate fictional accounts of slavery within their message to their readers. Although slavery has been abolished as we know it, Morrison and Walker captivate their audience with the horrific history of enslavement of African Americans through the sharing of the Neo-Slave Narratives. It is vital that African Americans know their legacy and cultural heritage. Although Walker and Morrison share the history of African Americans through fictional accounts of slavery in written texts, these accounts are examples of real life incidents. Whereas, America tries to keep hidden the atrociousness of slavery, Walker and Morrison help keep African American history alive through the Neo-Slave Narratives in their literary works.

The works selected for this study are *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. Chapter two of my thesis reveals the Neo-Slave Narratives written within the novel *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker. *The Color Purple* explores the life of protagonist Celie and her sister Nettie. The sisters experience abuse and alienation throughout their lives. Walker's novel examines the atrocious lifestyle of African American women and their determination to gain their freedom from the lifestyle that has been presented to them by their family members as well as community. Celie and

Nettie survive through their communication of letters to one another. It is the power of communication that enables them to withstand the trials and tribulations of life. Celie also writes letters to God which gives her guidance because as a young child she does not understand why all of the horrific things are happening to her. The examples of Neo-Slave Narratives demonstrated by Walker in *The Color Purple* explore the domination of the male gender with physical and sexual abuse toward the African American female.

## Chapter II: Neo-Slave Narratives within the Selected Works of Walker and Morrison

## Part I: The Empowered African American Women

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* is an exceptionally written novel expressing Neo-Slave Narratives of African American women. In the novel, Walker specifically shows how African American women suffer through physical, sexual, mental and psychological forms of servitude. The United States of America is known as "home of the brave and land of the free", but African Americans were not free. The Declaration of Independence was established on July 4, 1776. It states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" (US National Archives 1). In spite of the Declaration of Independence claiming all men to be free, African Americans were enslaved to the white slave masters for over four hundred years. Walker also demonstrates within her novel how these strong and courageous women overcame the adversity of oppression and abuse to survive. The main focus will be on the characters Celie, Nettie and Sofia. Although Celie and Nettie's life story begins in bondage, they are triumphant in the end. Celie and Nettie are both abused by their step-father, Fonso, and Celie is also abused by her husband, Mr. \_\_. However, Sofia's battles throughout her life are with family and the townspeople.

The character of Celie's life is one of sexual entrapment. As a child, Celie never got to experience a normal childhood. Thus, Celie describes the atrocious act of rape, "Then he grab hold my titties. 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" (Walker 1). In other words, just like black slave girls were raped by the white slave masters, Celie was

repeatedly raped by her step-father. Although Fonso told Celie to be quiet, writing the letters gave Celie a voice to be heard when she was forbidden to speak. Thereby writing the letters to God, Celie is able to talk about her abusive experiences instead of holding everything inside of her mind. Also, a man is forbidding the woman to speak with others to share her brutal experience. Fonso says, “You better not never tell nobody but God. It’d kill your mammy” (Walker 1). This statement releases fear into the young Celie. Just like the slave master controls the slave with a whip, Fonso’s command puts a hold on Celie’s mouth to control her. She believes telling God is acceptable since Fonso said she could tell God. This statement from Fonso demonstrates the aggressive control of the male over the female. This statement also reveals human bondage because Fonso forbids Celie to speak. Celie is forced to accept the abuse as if it is a part of regular life.

This abuse further resembles the controlling power of man which existed during the times of enslavement. After the threat from Fonso, Celie begins writing letters to God expressing her feelings and looking for answers to why things are happening to her. In other words, what did she do wrong to deserve this treatment? Walker proclaims to her audience how the abusiveness of a parent can affect children tremendously and cause them to turn to others for help. In this case of sexual abuse, Celie can only turn to God to express her feelings. Literary critic Eva Boesenberg’s article “The Danger of fulfillment: Perplexities of Bildung in *The Color Purple*” discusses the effects of Celie’s silence,

The struggle over the meaning of her own experience and the world around her is a matter of life and death for Celie, since Pa’s word, patriarchal discourse, would force her to silently endure all abuse, deny

her perceptions, and ultimately obliterate her as a person altogether.

Celie's survival hinges on creating her own voice. (Boesenberg 198)

Boesenberg is pointing out the significance of a father silencing his child in the midst of abuse. She also is sharing that silencing a child can be very detrimental to the child's survival. Boesenberg further describes in her article how the abuse affects the relationship between child and parent. Boesenberg also says, "The combined physical and verbal violence of the man she believes to be her father abruptly terminates Celie's childhood and destroys the possibility of affectionate relations between the girl and her parents" (199). With this statement, Boesenberg confirms the harsh reality of the breakdown of a family due to abusive behavior from the parents. Parents and children have great bonds with one another. Parents are the nurturers for their children and they are the first to teach their children about love. When parents who are supposed to love their children scar them by abusive behavior, it is devastating to the mental capacity of the child. Walker demonstrated how destructive Fonso was to his family through his abusive actions. Fonso wounded an innocent child's perceptive of the meaning of love.

Literary critic Barbara Smith's article "Sexual Oppression Unmasked" discusses how women have been oppressed and how it is exposed through literary author Alice Walker's novel *The Colored Purple*. Sexual oppression is a form of bondage that the women in *The Color Purple* experience. Within the article, Smith says, "What is happening" to Celie is that the man she believes to be her father has begun raping her when her mother is too ill from numerous pregnancies to have sex with him. Celie has two babies by him, and he quickly disposes of them" (Smith 171). In other words, throughout her childhood Celie was raped over and over and as a result she gave birth to

two children. Just like slaves were not able to keep their children, Celie also did not have an opportunity to raise and love her children because they were sold like merchandise on an auction block. Also, Smith describes the oppression suffered by the black woman from the black man. She also exposes in her article the oppression suffered by a child by way of sexual incest. Celie is a young child when she is raped by her step-father. Smith further highlights the message that Walker exposes in *The Color Purple* concerning the male's aggressive need to dominate. Neo-Slave Narratives are historical accounts of slavery suffered by African Americans (Rushdy 3). Slavery as America knows it, dealt with the bondage, abuse and oppression that African Americans suffered for over four hundred years at the hand of the white man. Also, within this passage, Walker expresses the oppression of black women by black men as it relates to parent-child relationships. Walker further expresses the helplessness of the black woman in her novel. Celie is sexually raped and abused as a child and is unable to defend herself against the aggressive male who is her step-father. Celie experiences sexual oppression from her step-father and husband through their abusive sexual acts upon her body. Celie is further forced into the sexual acts with the men. Just like the slave women were forced into sexual acts with their slave masters, Celie also did not have a choice in the matter.

After Celie is married off to an abusive husband, her younger sister Nettie is left at home to defend herself against Fonso. Celie calls her husband Mr.\_. Meanwhile, as Mr.\_ is on top of Celie, she is busy wondering if Nettie is safe. Celie is not interested in having sex with her husband. Mr.\_ uses his wife like a sex toy like the white slave masters did to the slaves. One day Nettie escapes from her home due to her step-father's behavior. Thus, Celie writes to God saying, "Nettie here with us. She run way from

home. She say she hate to leave our stepma, but she had to git out, maybe fine help for the other little ones” (Walker 16). With this statement, Celie feels a sense of strength by sharing her life with God through letter writing. Similarly, slaves called on God for strength during the time of slavery due to the dehumanization treatment from their slave masters. Frederick Douglas was a former slave who wrote his own slave narrative describing his horrific life while in slavery. Within his narrative, he explains how the slaves sang songs which had hidden messages to give them strength during slavery. Douglas writes, “They told a tale of woe which was then altogether beyond my feeble comprehension; they were tones loud, long, and deep; they breathed the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains” (Gates 324). Douglas describes how the songs were a plea to God to free the slaves from the atrocities of slavery. Slaves only had God to look to for help. The songs sounded depressing to Douglas and therefore, he did not understand the meaning of the songs. Within the songs, the slaves cried out for help to God. The white slave master controlled the slaves and they could only look to God for help.

Furthermore, Nettie escapes from her abusive step-father before she ends up like Celie, pregnant with children from incestualize rape. If Nettie had of stayed in the house any longer with her step-father, he would have repeatedly raped her like he did her sister Celie. Therefore, Nettie escapes to be with her big sister because she believes she will be safe at Celie’s house. Although Nettie has escaped from the bondage and control of her step-father, she is still not free due to the advances from Celie’s husband. Even though Celie is happy Nettie is with her in the house, Mr.\_ begins admiring Nettie. Even though

Mr. \_ is married to Celie, he originally wanted Nettie (Walker 17). Celie's husband says to Nettie, "That's a real pretty dress you got on, ... Them shoes look just right. Your skin. Your hair. Your teefs" (Walker 17). In other words, Mr. \_ is admiring everything about Nettie and he desires to have her for sexual pleasures. He is also demonstrating how closely related his actions are to the white slave master during slavery. The slave masters raped as many women as they could and Celie's husband was attempting to do the same thing by trying to rape Nettie as well. Celie's husband pursuit of Nettie is another example of the aggressiveness of the male gender over the female. Celie mentions, "Soon he stop. He say one night in bed, Well, us done help Nettie all we can. Now she got to go" (Walker 17). In other words, because Mr. \_ could not have Nettie sexually; he put her out in the street. His behavior is a clear illustration of control because he wanted to sexually control Nettie like the slave masters did their slaves. Also, by evicting Nettie, Mr. \_ is breaking up a strong sister bond of love. If no one else loved Celie, she knew that her sister Nettie loved her. Mr. \_ action is another example of the harsh treatment extended upon Celie, an African American woman. His action is also representative of how white slave masters treated black women during slavery. Slave masters broke up families by selling and trading family members to other plantation owners.

Literary critic Smith discusses how Walker shows the suffering of African American women and what they must overcome to be free,

After her second baby, Celie's father loses interest in her and starts bothering her younger sister, Nettie. Celie is determined to protect Nettie from her own fate. To get rid of her, her father forces Celie to marry Mr. \_\_, a widower with four unruly children. The arrangements for the

marriage are indistinguishable from a transaction for the purchase of a farm animal-or a slave. This man, whom Celie does not even know, is actually interested in Nettie and is of the same sorry ilk as Celie's father. By merely shifting the locale of Celie's hell, Walker shows how little difference there is between the circumstances of an abused daughter and an abused wife. 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. (Smith 171)

With this statement, Smith is pointing out an important factor of Walker's novel as it relates to the suffering of African American women. She specifically speaks on the male's aggressive need to control all situations. Smith also expresses how the woman, whether a child or an adult is dehumanized by the African American man. She further expresses how African American women were treated in the South within their own culture. Smith also points out how a man thinks concerning a woman and her value to a family.

Walker further demonstrates the Neo-Slave Narrative through the physical and psychological abuse that Celie suffers from her step-father and husband. This type of abuse falls in line with the definition of Neo-Slave Narratives being fictional slavery told through a first-person narrator within a text. Celie is the main first-person narrator throughout the novel. Celie writes to God saying, "Harpo ast his daddy why he beat me. Mr.\_\_\_\_ say, Cause she my wife. Plus, she stubborn. All women good for-he don't finish...He beat me like he beat the children. He say, Celie, git the belt" (Walker 22). In

other words, just because Celie was a wife, her husband believes she deserves to be beaten. This is the thought process of the man in the south within Walker's novel. In Mr. \_\_\_ opinion, the woman is only good for beating. Celie's husband is treating her like a child instead of an adult. In other words, the woman has no self-worth or value within society. Within this statement, Walker explains the male dominance over the female.

Throughout her novel, Walker describes the physical and emotional exploitation of women that occurred in the South. Literary critic Ary Syamanad Tahir reveals how the protagonist Celie is psychologically abused by her husband. He writes, "He never cares about Celie's feelings, emotions and her body, and treats her less than a human. He causes emotional damage by never showing any respect for her as a human being; he orders her around without ever saying anything kind to her" (Tahir 11). In other words, Mr. \_\_\_ psychologically abuses Celie through disrespect, neglect and silence. Mr. \_\_\_ disrespects and neglects Celie by the way he treats her as a child and not as his wife. No one should be treated like slaves were treated during slavery. He also demonstrates silence by not communicating as a husband should to his wife. Celie's title as a wife means nothing because women are insignificant to Mr. \_\_\_. Walker aggressively conveys how women are insignificant in the mind of man in her novel.

Literary critic Yvonne Johnson's article *The Voices of African American Women*, examines the frailness of African American women within the works of prominent African American authors. She also discusses the frailties of the woman in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. Johnson writes, "The powerlessness Walker's women feel is often reaffirmed by the physical abuse they endure in their marriages. Many of the women in Walker's stories have been silenced by abuse" (81). Powerlessness is a

psychological affect that stems from abuse that Walker describes within the novel.

Johnson shares two examples of the powerlessness suffered by Celie within the novel.

Johnson says, “When Celie’s stepfather tells her to “never tell nobody but God” after he

has raped and abused her, Celie obeys by writing her story in a series of letters to God”

(81). Johnson’s second examples states, “When her husband beats her, Celie survives by

refusing to feel” (81). Johnson describes the effects of abuse suffered by women and

particularly the narrator Celie. Johnson also confirms the abuse that Walker describes of

Celie in her novel by sharing her viewpoints of the issues of African American women

which refers back to the times of slavery. As a result of the oppression, women suffered

through identity challenges. Walker continues to express Neo-Slave Narratives within her

novel as she displays the oppression of women through sexism. Through it all; Walker’s

characters look to discover their own identity and gain their freedom.

Literary critic Daniel W. Ross wrote an article “Celie in the Looking Glass: The Desire for Selfhood in *The Color Purple*.” He discusses the loss of identity for women as they suffer psychologically by way of low self-esteem and self-worth from the atrocities of abuse,

Consequently, women often think of their bodies as torn or fragmented, a pattern evident in Walker’s Celie. To confront the body is to confront not only an individual’s abuse but also the abuse of women’s bodies throughout history; as the external symbol of women’s enslavement, this abuse represents for woman a reminder of her degradation and her consignment to an inferior status. (Ross 70)

With this statement, Ross is further emphasizing Walker's message of the psychological effects of slavery that African American women experience as a result of abuse. Ross is also describing what the body of a woman goes through as they deal with the dehumanization of their bodies. Women must reconnect with their bodies after such humiliation and abuse. Ross also says, "One of the primary projects of modern feminism has been to restore women's bodies, appropriated long ago by a patriarchal culture, to them. Because the female body is the most exploited target of male aggression, women have learned to fear or even to hate their bodies" (70). Ross is sharing that many women have been violated by men for many years, and feminists have set out to bring restoration unto the women. Ross is also sharing how women treat their bodies due to the exploitation that they suffer. Women must deal with all of the reactions and reflexes that stem from their bodies after such exploitation and mutilation.

For instance, Celie finds a peculiar way to deal with the beatings and rapes that her body has suffered from her step-father and husband. Celie says to God, "It all I can do not to cry. I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you a tree. That's how come I know trees fear man" (Walker 22). Strictly speaking, Celie pretends to be a hard piece of wood that cannot be easily wounded. My assessment of Celie's statement reveals that she imagines being a strong foundation that cannot be broken or bruised. The tree represents a defense mechanism, strength and survival. If Celie can imagine herself as a tree, she can see herself surviving whatever attacks come her way. Trees can survive many storms, and therefore, Celie can visualize surviving all of the abuse from the men in her life. In nature, trees take abuse from the weather, but they survive so Celie sees herself surviving the abuse like a tree.

Another example of spousal abuse as it relates to the Neo-Slave Narrative exposed in Walker's novel concerns the relationship between Harpo and Sofia. Harpo is the son of Mr. \_\_\_ who seeks advice concerning how to control his wife's behavior. Harpo is under the assumption that a woman must be controlled by the man. Harpo is ill advised by his father on how women should be treated. Harpo visits his father and Mr. \_\_\_ says, "Well how you s'pect to make her mind? Wives is like children. You have to let 'em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating" (Walker 35). With this statement, Walker is sharing the thought process of the male. Mr. \_\_\_ believes women can only be controlled by physically and sexually abusing them. In like manner, literary critic Ary Syamanad Tahir wrote an article discussing the gender violence in *The Color Purple* as it relates to physical and psychological violence. Tahir writes, "Physical violence is seen in the relationship between Harpo and his wife Sofia. He beats his wife because "the woman s'pose to mind." In Harpo's view, it is a respectable thing for a man to do to his wife" (12). With this statement, Tahir shares how the mentality of the man causes him to think he is supposed to control the woman at all times. Harpo also believes beating a woman is a part of life because his father has educated him to act accordingly with his own wife. Tahir utilizes the statement to further illustrate the physical violence of women within *The Color Purple*.

In addition to the spousal abuse that Sophia experiences, she also experiences battles within her own family. In a conversation with Celie, Sophia says, "All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers. I had to fight my cousins and my uncles. A girl child ain't safe in a family of men." (Walker 40). With this statement, Sophia is explaining to Celie how she has had to protect herself against the

dominance of men in her own family and she refuses to have to fight with her husband too. Sophia refuses to let any man beat on her without a fight. Sophia refuses to subject herself to the abuse of men. Sophia has watched her mother suffer from spousal abuse. Sophia says to Celie, “You remind me of my mama. She under my daddy dumb. Naw, she under my daddy foot. Anything he say, goes. She never say nothing back. She never stand up for herself” (Walker 41). In other words, Sophia sees the type of misfortunes her mother has encountered from her daddy and she knows that that type of life is not worth living. Sofia’s mother did not have a voice of her own. She did everything she was told to do by her controlling husband. Within this passage, Sophia sees the oppression that her mother suffers from her husband and she desires to be a free woman with a voice. Sophia refuses to be a closed mouth wife like her mother.

As Sophia’s suffers physical abuse from her husband Harpo, she also suffers physical abuse from the white mayor and she is imprisoned for several years. An incident between Miss Millie, the mayor’s wife, and Sophia land her in prison,

All your children so clean, she say, would you like to work for me, by my maid? Sofia say, Hell no. She say, What you say? Sofia say, Hell no. Mayor look at Sofia, push his wife out the way. Stick out his chest. Girl, what you say to Miss Millie? Sofia say, I say, Hell no. He slap her... The polices come, start slinging the children off the mayor, bang they heads together. Sofia really start to fight. They Drag her to the ground... When I see Sofia I don’t know why she still alive. They crack her skull, they crack her ribs. They tear her nose loose on one side. They blind her in one eye. She swole from head to foot. Her tongue the size of my arm, it stick out

tween her teef like a piece of ruber. She an't talk. And she just about the color of a eggplant. (Walker 85-7)

With this statement, one can see what happens to a woman who speaks out against white people. Sofia was not a woman to be pushed around by her family or her husband. Sofia always stood up strong against anyone who tried to control her life, but in this case she stood up against white people and it backfired. Unfortunately, Sofia was beaten up and thrown in jail because she was an African American woman who refused to be silent. Sofia took a stand against white people and she was punished for it.

Sofia's refusal to be a maid demonstrates how her entire life changed. In other words, Sophia went from being a free woman to an enslaved woman living in the most horrific conditions. In this instance, Sophia encountered issues of racism and classism from the mayor and policemen. Sophia's stay in prison is marked by the most inhumane conditions. Walker expresses the dehumanizing prison life of Sophia through one of Celie's letters to God. Celie writes, "They put Sofia to work in the prison laundry. All day long from five to eight she washing clothes...Her face yellow and sickly, her fingers look like fatty sausage. Everything nasty here, she say, even the air. Food bad enough to kill you with it. Roaches here, mice, flies, lice and even a snake or two" (Walker 88). In other words, prison is not a place for women or any human being due to the disgusting living conditions. Walker has informed her readers about what happens to African Americans imprisoned by the white culture. Also, from Walker's description, Sophia's life is horrifying and despicable. Living under these types of circumstances will surely leave a person depressed and oppressed. Unfortunately, In order to be released from prison, Sophia agrees to be the mayor's maid which is the one job she refused to do in the

beginning. In addition to Morrison characterizing Sophia as a maid, literary critic Linda Selzer classifies her as a maid,

Separated from her own family and forced to join the mayor's household against her will, living in a room under the house and assigned the housekeeping and childraising duties, Sophia carries out a role in the mayor's household which clearly recalls that of the stereotypical mammy on the Southern plantation.

(Selzer 73)

Selzer describes Sophia as a maid on a slave plantation. Although a maid is hired for service, Sophia was not hired for pay, but forced to be a maid in the mayor's home. Throughout the novel Sophia refuses to be a maid which lands her in jail in the first place. Selzer's view point stems from the typical stereotype of black women serving as house slaves on slave plantations.

As I continue to discuss the African American women within the novel, Celie, the protagonist, has been controlled by her husband in every aspect of her life. Nettie, Celie's younger sister had been writing her letters, but Mr. \_\_\_ was hiding the letters because Nettie refuted his advances once again after he kicked her out of the house. Celie was led to believe her sister and two children were dead, but they are still alive. Celie finds all of her sister's letters with the help of her husband's mistress, Shug Avery. Nettie's first letter says, "I know you think I am dead. But I am not. I been writing to you too, over the years, but Albert said you'd never hear from me again and since I never heard from you all this time, I guess he was right" (Walker 117). In other words, due to the controlling

power that Mr. \_\_\_ has over Celie, he hid all of the letters that Nettie had been writing to Celie. This is another example of the dominant power of man over woman.

Also, this is an example of Mr. \_\_\_ treating Celie like a slave and not a wife. He married Celie only to cook, clean, take care of his children and have sex with when he wanted it. In this relationship, Mr. \_\_\_ represents the oppressor and Celie is the oppressed victim. Nettie is the one constant “love” in Celie’s life and Mr. \_\_\_ halted all communication between the sisters. Within Nettie’s letters, she reveals some revelatory news concerning their family and her journey throughout Africa. Nellie writes, “I’m sure Albert is still the only one to take mail out of the box. But if this do get through, one thing I want you to know, I love you, and I am not dead. And Olivia is fine and so is your son” (Walker 117). With this statement, the dark hole that was once in Celie’s heart has subsided. This news is like a breath of fresh air on a hot muggy day. This news is also a big relief to Miss Celie. As a matter of fact, Celie reading the news that Nettie and her children are still alive pumps life back into her heart. Also, for Celie to hear the news that her family is coming home is very rewarding because it gives her hope to live in spite of the torture she has been experiencing in her life.

Celie and Nettie’s letters to one another empowers them and strengthens their love for one another. Likewise, literary critic Valerie Babb wrote an article discussing the writing of the letters in Walker’s novel. She states, “That both sisters choose to write is a direct result of their being imprisoned in a male-dominated, literacy-oriented culture where men arrange their marriages, and men decide how much access they will have to the written word” (Babb 109). In other words, Celie’s and Nettie’s step-father and Celie’s husband dominated and control every area of their lives with abusive force. Celie and

Nettie were imprisoned in a male dominated world until they started writing and receiving one another's letters. Within their letters they expressed every emotion they were feeling. Writing helped Celie gain some control in her life through oral expression.

Regardless of everything that Celie has gone through, her sister Nettie is the one person who loves her unconditionally. In spite of Nettie being evicted from Mr. \_\_\_ house, she became a missionary and teacher. She moved in with a preacher name Samuel, his wife Corrine and two adopted children who are actually Celie's children, Olivia and Adam. Nettie's life has definitely changed since running away from her abusive step-father, and being evicted by Mr. \_\_\_ who repeatedly tried to rape her. In her letters to Celie, she describes her life journey. Nettie's letters to Celie are very enlightening. Nettie writes, "Corrine and Samuel asked me If I would come with them and help them build a school in the middle of Africa, I said yes. But only if they would teach me everything they knew to make me useful as a missionary and someone they would not be ashamed to call a friend" (Walker 132). Nettie has a brand new start after being separated from her sister. She is on a mission in Africa to help build a school for children to receive their education. Nettie has always been intrigued to learn everything there was possible to learn. Also, Nettie feels like a part of their family which is very important to her considering she was separated from her only family, her sister Celie.

Even though Nettie takes care of Olivia and Adam, she does not consider herself a maid, which is a stereotypical job for African American women in the South. Nellie expresses in a letter to Celie, "Although I work for Corrine and Samuel and look after the children, I don't feel like a maid. I guess this is because they teach me, and I teach the children and there's no beginning or end to teaching and learning and working—it all

runs together” (Walker 134). Nettie is not forced to clean, cook and take care of children like her sister Celie; instead, she is a teacher to children in another country. Nevertheless, Nettie’s position is drastically different from Celie and Sophia’s as they are treated like slaves and Nettie like a family member.

After travelling to Africa and doing missionary work there, Nettie and family travelled to England where Nettie learns some shocking information regarding her African heritage. While Nettie is on her tour of Africa and England, she writes letters to Celie sharing the experience with her. Nettie writes, “Millions and millions of Africans were captured and sold into slavery—you and me, Celie! And whole cities were destroyed by slave catching wars. Today the people of Africa—having murdered or sold into slavery their strongest folks—are riddled by disease and sunk in spiritual and physical confusion” (Walker 139). With this statement, Nettie is sharing with Celie how African Americans sold their own people into slavery. This piece of information is relative to how Walker describes black fathers and husbands abusing their black daughters and wives in *The Color Purple*. Walker in essence is exposing the unknown atrocities of Africa into her novel for her readers to discover. Walker’s African American male characters are treating the African American female characters as slaves. As Morrison highlights male abusiveness, literary critic Mae Henderson’s article “Women’s Issues in Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*” describes the degradation of women in Africa where Nettie is teaching and doing missionary work. Henderson writes, “If Celie is degraded and devalued as a black woman in the American South, Nettie discovers that, as an unmarried female, she is regarded with pity and contempt by the Olinka. She also learns about scarification and clitoridectomy, rituals of female mutilation in a patriarchal

society “(Henderson 70). African American women are dominated in Africa as well as the American South. Also, African women go through certain cultural rituals that are forced upon them in a male dominant society.

Morrison highlights throughout her novel the abusive control male has over female. Literary critic Emma Waters-Dawson’s article “Redemption Through Redemption of the Self in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *The Color Purple*” discusses the abusiveness of the African American male as well. She states, “In *The Color Purple*, black women suffer stressful situations: loveless, dull marriages, stifled creativity, jealous or cruel spouses, sexual and racial victimization, capitulation to ignorance and tradition, and myriad other problems” (Waters-Dawson 70). Waters-Dawson is in agreement concerning the treatment of African American women with Walker as it concerns the dehumanization of women. She further points out how the male controls every aspect of the women’s lives as if they are animals. Celie is heavily oppressed by her step-father and husband, but before the end of the novel, Celie gains strength and confidence within herself to speak out against the abuse from her husband.

Furthermore, as Celie, Nettie and Sophia have suffered sexual, physical and psychological abuse as African American women throughout their life; they emerge victoriously in the end. Walker describes their characters in her novel moving from a life engulfed in bondage into a life of freedom. The women begin to emerge into a lifestyle of having position and a voice where before they were treated like slaves. Shug, Sophia and Nettie play pivotal roles in Celie’s journey to freedom. Due to all of the abuse that Celie endured, she developed such character traits as low self-esteem, low morale, and worthlessness. Shug is the first one to impact Celie’s life on her way to freedom. As a

child growing up, Celie was not educated regarding sex. Celie's mother was always pregnant and she became sick and died without sharing the facts of life with her children. Walker uses Shug as the first person to explain sexuality to Celie in the novel. Celie and Shug are discussing sexual relationships as it relates to men. Celie writes, "Listen, she say, right down there in your pussy is a little button that gits real hot when you do you know what with somebody. It git hotter and hotter and then it melt. That the good part. But other parts good too, she say. Lot of sucking go on, here and there, she say" (Walker 77). Shug is explaining to Celie what is supposed to happen when a man and woman have sex. Shug is also explaining to Celie what sex should feel like in the midst of the sexual act. Sex has always been painful to Celie because she was raped as an adolescent. Sex has always been violent and non-interesting to Celie. Celie realizes she has never felt this way with a man, but Shug introduces her to this new information. Shug is also educating Celie about her sexual body parts.

In addition to the discussion about sex, Celie informs Shug about the rapes by her step-father. Celie shares for the first time the gruesome abuse suffered at the hand of her step-father. Celie breaks her silence with the tragedy from her childhood. Walker expresses the alliances that the women form in her novel in order to survive. It is the alliances that are formed that give the women strength and courage to live. Literary critic Tahir says, "Celie tells about her trauma, and thus, experiences the comforting and responsive love of an attentive listener. This enables Celie to mourn her past life and receive a comprehension of her story" (15). Tahir infers that the first step to freedom is releasing the hurt that has kept one bound for many years. The fact that Celie is able to share her story is a big relief because she was threatened by her step-father to keep silent.

Celie believes Fonso is her father and she should obey him because children are supposed to obey their parents. Celie was engulfed with all of the abuse which suffocated her mind and body; and now she takes a stand against her silencer to release all the agony which held her bound.

Another key step in Celie's road to freedom as it concerns the Neo-Slave Narrative within the novel, involves Shug's assistance in finding Nettie's letters that have been hidden by Mr. \_\_\_ for many years. Walker reveals this fact in her novel to continue to show the patriarchal control and the disconnection of the family in the South. Celie writes, "Saturday morning Shug put Nettie letter in my lap...He been keeping your letters, say Shug" (Walker 119). In other words, thanks to Celie's friend Shug, Celie can now read the letters from her sister Nettie that Mr. \_\_\_ had been hiding for many years. After all of this time, Celie thought her beloved sister was dead, but thanks to Shug's discovery, Celie has new found hope. The discovery of all of the letters also allows Celie to gain information concerning secrets within her family. Literary critic Tahir says, "Finding these letters were a turning point in her life as she begin to explore hope once again and she began to rebel her husband's authority for the first time" (15). Tahir is adamant in pointing out the emancipation of Celie in his article regarding gender violence in *The Color Purple* because it reveals how African American women are survivors in spite of the enslavement they endure. Nettie's letters give Celie strength and power to stand up against her oppressor.

Another significant person in Celie's plight to freedom is her step-daughter-in-law, Sofia. Celie admires how Sofia stands strong against her abusive husband Harpo. In the past, Celie is unable to stand up against her patriarchal authority due to the fear that is

released into her life. Celie wishes she could stand up against her husband the way Sofia does with Harpo. Celie says to Sofia, “I say it cause I’m a fool, I say. I say it cause I’m jealous of you. I say it cause you do what I can’t. What that” she say. Fight. I say” (Walker 40). Celie is expressing how foolish she was to advise Harpo to beat his wife. Due to the abusive relationships Celie has endured her entire life; she does not know what else to say. All Celie has ever witnessed throughout her life is men abusing women. Also, Celie wishes she was strong and could fight like Sofia, thereby preventing perhaps some of the pain she has experienced throughout her life. Walker institutes into her novel the importance of female bonding with Shug, Sofia, Celie and Nettie because it strengthens and encourages the women in the midst of their horrible circumstances.

Literary critic Clenora Hudson-Weems wrote an article discussing the plight of African American women where she discusses the impact that Sophia has on Celie. She writes, “Sofia’s strength and sense of selfhood, like that of Sug [*cis*] (Celie’s husband’s former lover), have a very positive effect on Celie in that Sofia helps her to redefine her personhood, elements of retaliation against sexual subjugation” (Hudson-Weems 204). Sofia’s strength to stand up for her rights encouraged Celie. Also, Sofia always stood up to her husband Harpo and Celie wished she had the strength to stand up against Mr.\_\_\_\_. Celie lost her identity due to the abusive treatment from her step-father and husband, but with Sofia’s help she regains her dignity and self-worth. Shug and Celie’s husband have known one another for many years. Many years ago, Shug and Mr.\_ had a romantic relationship that produced three children. Mr.\_ explains his relationship with Shug to his father Old Mr.\_. He says, “I love Shug Avery. Always have, always will. I should have married her when I had the chance” (Walker 55). Mr.\_ is professing his love for another

woman in front of his current wife Celie. This is an example of how Mr.\_ disrespects his wife by professing his love for another woman. Mr.\_ believes his life would be better if he had married Shug.

Finally, as Shug and Sophia have impacted Celie's journey to freedom, her sister Nettie has also impacted her journey by her unconditional love and written letters. Nettie's letters have been very enlightening to the history of their family's life. Furthermore, Nettie's letters helped set Celie free because she was able to use her voice to speak in the letters. Nettie writes, "Pa is not our pa!" (Walker 176). The man who raped and beat Celie is not her father, but her step-father because he married her mother. This piece of news is very relevant to the history of their family. Also, this news is very edifying because it means Celie's father did not rape her but a man who is not related to her. Celie's feelings automatically change toward her biological father because he is now an innocent victim and not an oppressor. Celie's discovery concerning her father gives her a total new identity. Celie will no longer be identified as a child of a rapist, but a child of a loving father. This revealing information causes Celie to search for her real father instead of being scared of her father. This is the final piece to Celie's journey to freedom. Nettie's love has sustained Celie throughout her entire life. Nettie ended each letter with an affirmation of love for her sister. When Fonso and Mr.\_ degraded Celie with their words, Nettie always spoke the opposite to encourage her sister.

## Chapter II: Neo-Slave Narratives within the Selected Works of Walker and Morrison

## Part II: Surviving the Atrocities of Slavery

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is an exceptionally written novel expressing the Neo-Slave Narratives of African Americans. Morrison reveals the Neo-Slave Narratives through the life of protagonist Sethe and her family as they go from slavery to freedom. She also reveals how the impact of slavery affects relationships in the novel. The setting of Morrison's novel takes place from the 1850s to 1870s. Sethe and her family suffered physical, sexual and psychological abuse from slavery. Her family consists of four children: Howard, Buglar, Beloved, and Denver, husband Halle and mother-in-law Baby Suggs. Baby Suggs had six sons and two daughters all whom were enslaved. Sethe, Baby Suggs and their families were all enslaved on the Sweet Home plantation in Kentucky. After Sethe and her children escape to Ohio, she attempts to kill her children in order to prevent them from being reinstated into slavery. Sethe wanted to prevent her children from living in the bondage of slavery as she lived. She believed if she killed herself and her children, they could die a good death because slavery was crueler than death by her hands.

Unfortunately, Sethe kills her daughter Beloved and is haunted by the memory of her death for many years. The death of Beloved expresses a break in the relationship between mother and daughter. In fact, Sethe believes by killing her daughter she has saved her family from the horrors of further enslavement. Although, Sethe and her family did not return to Sweet Home to slavery, her action landed her and baby Denver in another type of slavery which was prison. This act of killing separates Sethe from her two

sons which once again cause a split in parent and child relationships. Parents are responsible for the nurturing and caring of their children. Unfortunately, her actions caused her mind to be emotionally in turmoil. Furthermore, Sethe and her children are haunted within their home at 124 Bluestone Road by the ghost of her daughter Beloved. Even though Sethe and her children escaped slavery and started a new life in Ohio, they continued to suffer eighteen years later from the psychologically effects of slavery.

As the Neo-Slave Narrative depicts the journey of an African American from bondage to freedom; Morrison began *Beloved* with freedom in 1873 in Ohio with flashbacks and memories periodically to the times of slavery in the 1850s on the Sweet Home plantation. Sethe and her baby daughter Denver are now freely living at 124 Bluestone Road in Ohio after serving many years in prison. Although free, Sethe cannot forget her past and therefore, she finds herself discussing her life story about her days in slavery. The memories of her daughter's death continue to haunt Sethe. In addition to Morrison expressing how Sethe cannot run from her past, literary critic Mahboobeh Khaleghi's article "Reclaiming Identity through the Community: A Study of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and a *Mercy*" discusses how Sethe's past continues to follow her into her present life. Khaleghi says, "For the former slaves, the protagonist of the novel, memories of the past are inescapable. They continue to hunt her, literally, in the spirit of her deceased daughter" (272). Sethe's past is hard to forget due to the connection of the haunting memory of slavery. The haunting memory is a form of mental bondage. Also, it is impossible for Sethe to forget the child she gave birth to while in slavery. The haunting memory also shows the strong relational bond between mother and daughter. Also, killing a child is something a parent should never forget. Although slavery is a very

heinous act, it is still a part of African American history, and it will never be forgotten especially by those who endured the enslavement due to the mental cruelty of it.

Morrison continues to discuss the haunting spirit that invades the home of Sethe and Denver. Sethe's two sons have run away due to the haunting spirit within the house. Morrison describes the reasoning behind Howard and Buglar's departure from their home. The narrator explains, "The sons, Howard and Buglar, had run away by the time they were thirteen years old- as soon as merely looking in a mirror shattered it(That was the signal for Buglar); as soon as two tiny hand prints appeared in the cake (that was it for Howard)" (Morrison 3). The young boys were so spooked that they left the comforts of their home without knowing where they were going. The departure of the boys' further implements a break in parental relationships. The strange events happening in the boys' home frightened them so much that it caused them to abandon their mother and sister. So as Sethe and Denver remain in their home, they go to battle with the ghost,

Sethe and Denver decided to end the persecution by calling forth the ghost that tried them so. Perhaps a conversation, they thought, an exchange of views or something would help. So they held hands and said, 'Come on. Come on. You may as well just come on.' 'You forgetting how little it is,' said her mother. 'She wasn't even two years old when she died. Too little to understand. Too little to talk much even.' 'For a baby she throws a powerful spell,' said Denver. 'No more powerful than the way I loved her,' Sethe answered and there it was again.

(Morrison 4-5)

With this statement, Morrison reveals the source of the ghost that is haunting Sethe's house. Sethe and Denver make reference to a human being as the source behind the ghost in the house. Also, Denver describes the power of a two year old ghost as very powerful. Denver wonders how a two year old can possess such power. Sethe explains in the passage that Beloved was too young to understand the reason why her mother took her life. Sadly, Sethe killed her oldest daughter after escaping from slavery, and in this dialogue with Denver she makes reference to her dead daughter. Sethe also expresses how much she loved her daughter even though she killed her daughter. Sethe explains to Denver that no matter how powerful the spirit is they are battling, it does not outweigh the power of her love for Beloved. Morrison further reveals to her audience in this passage how the spirit of Sethe's daughter still lives on in spite of her physical death. It also demonstrates how close the bond is between mother and daughter in spite of how tragic the daughter died. Sethe calling forth the ghost is representative of her facing her tragic past.

Literary critic Lisa Williams's article "The Character Beloved Depicts the Loss of Cultural Identity That Occurred during Slavery" explains the loss of cultural identity of African Americans while in slavery. Within the article she discussed the purpose of the haunting ghost of Sethe's daughter. Williams writes, "By creating a character that is a ghost, Morrison incorporates into her novel African beliefs in the continuing presence of the dead. Beloved represents the unvoiced horrors that took place on the slave ship" (77). With this statement, Williams expresses how Morrison adds African culture to her novel. For instance, the character Beloved symbolizes African Americans who were enslaved because they did not have a voice or an identity. Also, Africans who were kidnapped

from their homeland and brought to America to work for the white slave master had no voices to control their own bodies.

Slaves were not allowed to have opinions or receive education. Although slaves may have come over on the slave ship as families, their families were broken up and sold off to other slave masters. Furthermore, there were many atrocities that took place on the slave ships as it relates to the imprisoned Africans, but no one is discussing the horrors. Africans were not allowed to have rights because they were considered property like animals. African Americans not having any human rights are a clear example of mental abuse suffered during slavery. Also, slaves were forced to do manual labor for white people which are an example of mental abuse. They were forced to do things against their own will. However, literary critic Timothy Parrish has a different point of view concerning the ghost of *Beloved*. He says, "Morrison invokes the ghost of slavery in order to illuminate the continuity of African-American identity-a community originating in the shared experience of slavery" (Parrish 82). Parrish says the appearance of the ghost reveals identity in African Americans as it relates to their community sharing in their life history. Also, as communities work together, they can help one another unify and work together to build strong relationships. During slavery it was important that slaves build relationships with one another in order to survive. Slaves were not allowed to have an identity because they were not even considered as human beings; instead, slave masters treated slaves like animals.

In *Beloved*, Morrison allows Sethe to reconnect to a part of her past that deals with a man from Sweet Home. Sethe reconnects with one of Baby Suggs son, Paul D. Garner and they begin a relationship and start reminiscing about their at Sweet Home. As

Paul D. questions Sethe about her life, she discusses the sacrifice of her journey for freedom. Sethe says, "I got a tree on my back and a haint in my house, and nothing in between but the daughter I am holding in my arms. No more running-from nothing. I will never run from another thing on this earth. I took one journey and I paid for the ticket, but let me tell you something, Paul D. Garner: it cost too much!"(Morrison 18). Sethe's escape from slavery cost her one of her children's life. This statement says, escaping was not worth the life of her daughter. Sethe is also describing the wounds she suffered while in slavery as well. Sethe believes if she had not of run, she would still have her oldest daughter and would not have had to kill her. Also, Sethe mentions that she almost lost her baby daughter Denver as well when she went into labor out on the escape trail. African Americans who were forced into slavery paid a horrible price if they tried to escape; they paid the high cost of losing their life.

Sethe is in the midst of a conversation with Paul D. talking about a tree like the one shaped on her back when she has a flashback. Sethe reverts back to a past memory and says, "After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it" (Morrison 19). Sethe is physically free from slavery, but in the midst of her conversation with Paul D., she has a flashback of the brutal attack that took place at Sweet Home. Sethe cannot let go of the brutalizing memory which is a clear illustration of how slavery can psychologically affect a person. Breast milk belongs to a mother so she can feed her children, but Sethe was robbed of that by schoolteacher's nephews. Schoolteacher is the new slave master that took over after the owner Mr. Garner died. Schoolteacher is the brother-in-law of Mr. Garner. Sethe was raped of her own milk from her body. The raping of Sethe's milk is considered a

form of sexual servitude. By taking Sethe's milk, the nephews forced themselves upon her to relinquish a very precious nutrient that her body produces. After reporting the incident to Mrs. Garner, things got potentially dangerous for Sethe. Sethe states, "Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still. 'They used cowhide on you?' 'And they took my milk.' 'They beat you and you was pregnant?' 'And they took my milk!'" (Morrison 20). Sethe describes her brutal beating by the nephews with a whip. The beating of Sethe is a result of her opening her mouth, and slaves had no voice during slavery. The beating further describes the hideous acts that slaves suffered at the hands of the white man while in slavery.

The memory of Sethe's beating is forever embedded in her mind because she has the imprint of a tree on her back. It is impossible to forget this atrocious beating as she carries this reminder with her every day. Sethe refers back to the incident of the milk because it was so devastating. Sethe was literally raped which is something that may never be forgotten. This is a brutal physical example of what African Americans experienced during times of slavery. Paul D. cannot believe Sethe was beaten like that while she was pregnant. With this passage, Morrison is pointing out the cruelties that African Americans suffered during enslavement. Paul D. may be wondering what type of person beats a pregnant woman? Although Sethe is free in Ohio, the atrocities of slavery still linger in her mind as well as on her body. Sethe's physical body is no longer in Kentucky on the slave plantation, but the scars from the physical abuse are still on her back to remind her daily of her enslavement. To further describe Sethe's beating, literary critic Babacar M'Baye wrote an article discussing racial oppression of the slaves at Sweet Home. He says, "Sethe was a victim of white sexual abuse...The mark of the 'tree' on

Sethe's back symbolizes the brutal impact of the sexual violence that whites use to dehumanize, depersonalize, and control black people" (M'Baye 118). White slave masters used physical and sexual violence to control blacks, and they made them feel degraded and worthless. Also, the scars on Sethe's back will always remind her of the enslavement to the white man because she suffered the scars at the hand of the white slave master.

As Morrison continues the story in the novel from the present to the past, Sethe is sharing a past memory with Denver regarding her birth. Sethe explains to Denver what she had to endure in the midst of her escape from Sweet Home while six months pregnant. Sethe says, on her path from Kentucky to Ohio she met Amy Denver, who claimed to be on her way to Boston looking for velvet. Sethe's feet were swollen and she could barely walk so she started to crawl as Amy walked alongside her. Sethe was looking for food and a place to rest. Sethe crawled to a place Amy called "lean-to", an empty spot, to rest. Amy massaged Sethe's swollen feet as she released tears of agony and pain (Morrison 39-42). Sethe had never explained the whole story to her daughter Denver concerning her birth out on the escape trail. Sethe shared this new information to warn Denver about the painful lesson of remembering the past and being enslaved at the Sweet Home plantation. In addition to what Sethe has just explained to Denver, she expresses how she cannot get away from her past and how her past has never died due to her memory,

It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else.

Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It's never going away.

Even if the whole farm-every tree and grass blade of it dies. The picture is

still there and what's more, if you go there-you who never was there-if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you. So, Denver, you can't never go there. Never. Because even though it's all over-over and done with-it's going to always be there waiting for you. That's how come I had to get all my children out. No matter what. (Morrison 44-5)

Sethe states how her memory is a key component that holds her in the past. Also, Sethe is explaining how her past is real and it never dies even if she is not in the same physical place where she suffered the pain. Additionally, Sethe forbids Denver to go to that place of slavery because although it does not exist physically, the effects of slavery will always be there. Sethe explanations justifies why she freed her children from Sweet Home. It further solidifies Sethe's act of killing her children to prevent them from being returned to a life of slavery at Sweet Home. In spite of Sethe killing her oldest daughter, it prevented their return to slavery where they would have been treated inhumanely. Morrison further reveals with this passage the psychological effects of slavery with her protagonist character. Sethe continues to suffer from the violent act of killing her daughter. Morrison discloses how after eighteen years, her African Americans characters continue to live with the suppressed memories from slavery. Literary critic Linda Krumholz's article "The Ghosts of Slavery: Historical Recovery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" explains the ghosts of slavery as it relates to historical recovery. She writes, "Sethe's healing process is the focal point of the novel, as she gradually and painfully recollects the repressed past" (Krumholz 402). Krumholz explains that Sethe's healing is connected to her painful past and she must release the past in order to move toward her

future. Sethe's oppressed past holds her in a mental prison. In Krumholz opinion, Sethe's healing is the major aspect of Morrison's novel.

Morrison previously discussed how the ghost of Beloved haunted the home of Sethe and Denver. A few months later, Morrison introduces Beloved as a live human being returning unto her mother. Sethe, Denver and Paul D are returning from a carnival for colored people when they are approached by a strange young woman sitting on a stump near their house at 124 Bluestone Road. Just when Sethe is trying to forget her past, Morrison introduces Sethe's past back into her life as well as into her home,

A FULLY DRESSED woman walked out of the water. She barely gained the dry bank of the stream before she sat down and leaned against a mulberry tree. All day and all night she sat there, her head resting on the trunk in a position abandoned enough to crack the brim in her straw hat. Everything hurt but her lungs most of all...It took her the whole of the next morning to lift herself from the ground and make her way through the woods past a giant temple of boxwood to the field and then the yard of the slate-gray house. Exhausted again, she sat down on the first handy place—a stump not far from the steps of 124. (60)

Sethe's older daughter Beloved, is back from the dead and has shown up at her mother's home. Also, Morrison is implying how the bond of the parent and child still lives on in spite of the earlier death. This statement also demonstrates how the bond between mother and daughter never dies because Beloved has returned to her mother. Morrison uses symbolism in this passage as she introduces Beloved to her readers. Firstly, a mulberry tree symbolizes the bruises on Sethe's back designed as a tree. Secondly, the trunk is also

significant to the tree image on Sethe's back. Thirdly, Beloved travelled through the woods like Sethe's trail to freedom where she met Amy Denver. Lastly, Beloved's exhaustion is significant to Sethe's exhaustion during her escape from Sweet Home. Beloved could barely lift herself from the ground on her path back to her mother, and Sethe had to crawl to the 'lean-to' spot to rest her swollen feet and body.

Morrison continues to establish a connection between Sethe and her past (Beloved). The narrator says, "Sethe was deeply touched by her sweet name; the remembrance of glittering headstone made her feel especially kindly toward her" (Morrison 63). In other words, the mysterious young lady who showed up at 124 Bluestone Road who calls herself Beloved is also the name of Sethe's dead daughter. Sethe is interested in finding out more information about Beloved because she is starting to feel a connection with the young lady. Sethe is also very smitten by the beauty of Beloved. (Morrison 68). Beloved begins to ask Sethe questions regarding earrings and Sethe's mother which begins to concern Denver. Denver wonders how Beloved knows about such things that happened in Sethe's past,

Beloved took every opportunity to ask some funny question and get Sethe going. Denver noticed how greedy she was to hear Sethe talk. Now she noticed something more. The questions Beloved asked: "Where your diamonds?" "Your woman she never fix up your hair?" And most perplexing: Tell me your earrings. How did she know? (75)

The question is who is Beloved really? Who told Beloved about Sethe's earrings? Also, how does Beloved know about Sethe's mother not combing her hair? In this instance, Morrison is painting a picture of some type of family connection that really concerns

Denver. Beloved is asking Sethe some real personal questions that only family members should know.

Thus, it is scary trying to figure out how a stranger could know personal things about one's family. In addition to Morrison's logic of *Beloved*, critic Krumholz gives her point of view in her article. She states, "Beloved is the incarnation of Sethe's baby girl and of her most painful memory-the murder of her daughter to protect her children from slavery. Beloved is Sethe's 'ghost' the return of her repressed past, and she forces Sethe to confront the gap between her motherlove and the realities of motherhood in slavery" (Krumholz 400). Krumholz identifies Beloved as the ghost of Sethe's daughter. She further states that Sethe must resolve her repressed past in order to free herself for a future. Sethe must forgive herself for killing her daughter, in order to rectify her past actions.

Morrison continues to reveal the Neo-Slave Narratives in *Beloved* as it relates to relationships amongst slaves. By way of explanation, Sethe reveals the rules concerning marriage amongst the slaves. Sethe explains, "That lady I worked for in Kentucky gave them to me when I got married. What they called married back there and back then. I guess she saw how bad I felt when I found out there wasn't going to be no ceremony, no preacher. Nothing. I thought there should be something-something to say it was right and true" (Morrison 70). Slaves were not permitted to legally marry like the white people. Slaves did not have rights because they were considered the property of the white man. The slave masters had sales contracts on the slaves and therefore, they did not own the rights to their own bodies. Although the Garners' treated their slaves with kindness, the blacks were still slaves with no human rights. Mrs. Garner was kind of enough to give

Sethe a wedding gift which normally does not happen between slave master and slave. At the age of fourteen, Sethe married Halle the youngest child of Baby Suggs, and they had four children. Three of the children were born at Sweet Home and the fourth child was born on the escape route to Ohio. Her marriage to Halle is a part of her past life now because she is in Kentucky and she does not know his location.

Morrison explains the after effects of slavery regarding Baby Suggs as Sethe reaches freedom for the first time,

Because slave life had ‘busted her legs, back, head, eyes, hands, kidneys, womb and tongue,’ she had nothing left to make a living with but her heart-which she put to work at once. Accepting no title of honor before her name, but allowing a small caress after it, she became an unchurched preacher, one who visited pulpits and opened her great heart to those who could use it. (Morrison 102)

The narrator describes the physical effects to Baby Sugg’s body after having been enslaved for most of her life. She decides to offer hope and encouragement through her heart by preaching to others at the “Clearing.” The clearing was a place where the slaves went to sing, dance, cry, laugh and pray. In other words, it was a place to release any type of anger and frustration that was plaguing the slaves, but also a time to rejoice. Baby Suggs physical body was in bad shape, but her inner heart still had compassion to release unto others. Preaching at the ‘Clearing’ gave hope and inspiration to the former and run-away slaves. Morrison provides in the novel a place where slaves can go to join together to communicate, be strengthened and healed. Literary critic Peter Capuano article “Truth

in Timbre: Morrison Extension of Slave Narrative Song in *Beloved*” discusses the importance of the song for African Americans during slavery,

Often in *Beloved*, when characters cannot read or write or even talk about the brutality they experience as slaves, they sing to affirm their participation in life and defend their status as human beings. Song offers slaves the opportunity to express their personal testimonies while remaining within the framework of their larger cultural experiences-all without actually speaking of their shame and trauma. (Capuano 96)

With this statement, Capuano expresses the importance of singing songs for the slaves.

The songs had secretive and spiritual messages that only they understood. Capuano is in agreement with Morrison regarding the importance of the spiritual songs to the slaves.

The songs are encouraging and they helped to lift the spirits of the slaves in spite of their horrible circumstances. These songs helped the slaves to fight the inhumane conditions from their oppressors.

After Sethe's arrival, she was free for twenty-eight days until schoolteacher, his nephews and the sheriff showed up looking for her and the children. Sethe took off with her four children to the shed and slit the throat of her daughter Beloved. She also threw Denver toward planks while her two boys sat on the ground bleeding. Even though schoolteacher entered the shed to reclaim his slaves, upon seeing all of the blood he realized there was no value to claim from his slaves. Therefore, after witnessing all of the blood and believing that Sethe was insane for committing such act, he and his nephews left Ohio and returned to Sweet Home empty handed. Because Sethe committed the crime of killing her daughter, she was taken to prison along with her daughter Denver because

she refused to let her go (Morrison 175-6). The thought of Sethe and her children having to return into slavery caused her to act violently. She refused to let her children return under the authority of schoolteacher, and in spite of the desperate act of killing her beloved daughter, she prevented them from a life of enslavement. African Americans were forced into slavery over four hundred years ago and Sethe did not want her children to return to a life of slavery to be controlled by vicious schoolteacher. Sethe had already been raped and beaten under his command and she did not want her children to face that type of cruelty.

Throughout the novel, Morrison is showing how the effects of slavery can prevent African Americans from moving forward in their lives with the different passages reverting back to their past lives enslaved. Furthermore, Baby Suggs compares her life at Sweet Home to her enslaved life in Carolina,

The Garners, it seemed to her, ran a special kind of slavery, treating them like paid labor, listening to what they said, teaching what they wanted known. And He didn't stud his boys. Never brought them to her cabin with directions to 'lay down with her,' like they did in Carolina, or rented their sex out on other farms. It surprised and pleased her, but worried her too.

(Morrison 165)

Morrison explains how in spite of Baby Suggs being enslaved at Sweet Home, she did not suffer with the Garners' like she did in Carolina. Baby Suggs still had chores to do, but it did not compare to Carolina which caused her hip injury. Also, on slave plantations, the masters did not listen to the slaves or offer them education like the Garners' are doing on their plantation. Although this may be true, Baby Suggs was still a slave, but did not

suffer from physical or sexual brutality that normally takes place on slave plantations. Although the Garners' were nice to their slaves, they still were not treated like white people.

Additionally, Baby Suggs journey from bondage to freedom is furthered revealed as her baby son Halle buys her freedom from Sweet Home. The narrator writes, "Baby Suggs' eighth and last child, who rented himself out all over the country to buy her away from there" (Morrison 27). Halle paid for his mother's freedom from slavery on the Sweet Home plantation. He worked extra time outside of Sweet Home to buy his mother's freedom. This is a very honorable thing to do for his mother. This is another example showing how the Garners' are different from other slave masters. Also, Mr. Garner drove Baby Suggs to Kentucky where she would begin to live a life of freedom on the Bodwins' farm. Not only was Baby Suggs free, but she was driven from her place of enslavement to her new place of freedom. The narrator further states, "Anybody Baby Suggs knew, let alone loved, who hadn't run off or been hanged, got rented out, loaned out, bought up, brought back, stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen or seized" (Morrison 28) In other words, slaves were always being moved around from one plantation to another so Baby Suggs understood the plan of her son. In her lifetime, she had witness slaves being moved like checkers in a board game (Morrison 27). Slaves did not have permanent homes because they were always being tossed around from one place to another like pieces on a board game. With this statement, slaves are being compared to a mere board game which has no life or control of itself. Slaves are used by everyone that touches them like people move checker pieces back and forth on a game board.

Although slavery was abolished in 1863, Morrison shares in her novel how in 1874; Negroes were still being treated inhumanely by white people,

Eighteen seventy-four and white folks were still on the loose. Whole towns wiped clean of Negroes; eighty-seven lynchings in one year alone in Kentucky; four colored schools burned to the ground; grown men whipped like children; children whipped like adults; black women raped by the crew; property taken, necks broken. (Morrison 212)

Morrison further reveals to her audience how Negroes were treated in spite of slavery being abolished. During this time, white people still wanted to control the black race even though they did not have the authority to do so. Morrison is exposing the atrocities that some blacks continued to suffer while legally being set free by the law. This passage further expresses some of the Neo-Slave Narratives written in Morrison's novel. Also, within this passage, communities were destroyed with the killings of the people, education was affected with the burning of the schools and families were torn apart with the abuse to the parents and children. These are all issues that African Americans suffered during enslavement at the hands of their white slave masters.

In spite of the suffrage of African Americans, Morrison springs forward to the present time with Sethe realizing Beloved is her reincarnated daughter. Sethe declares, "BELOVED, she my daughter. She mine. See. She come back to me of her own free will and I don't have to explain a thing. I didn't have time to explain before because it had to be done quick. Quick. She had to be safe and I put her where she would be...love was tough...she back now (Morrison 236). Sethe feels like she saved her daughter by killing her, and it is okay because she has returned from the dead to be with her mother. Sethe

recognizes that the stranger who has been living in her house is her daughter due to hints that Beloved dropped like singing an old song that Sethe used to sing to her children. A part of Sethe's past has returned and instead of it haunting her, Beloved gives her joy. Nevertheless, critic Khaleghi shares his view point on the matter of Sethe and Beloved's reconnection. He says, "When Sethe discovers Beloved's identity, she interprets her reappearance as a sign of forgiveness and in immense relief turns her back on the world and devotes herself to loving Beloved; she believes she is forgiven and given a second chance" (Khaleghi 478). Beloved is sent back to Sethe so she can start over as a mother to her daughter. Also, Khaleghi interprets this passage as a resolution to her past action of killing her infant child. Now that Beloved is back, the killing of her daughter can be dismissed from her family's life. Sethe believes her family has been restored and she can finally forgive herself for murdering her own child. Sethe believes she is free from the penalty of murdering her child.

Instead, Sethe's joy is temporary because Beloved has come back for revenge. In addition, the narrator writes, "Beloved accused her of leaving her behind. Of not being nice to her, not smiling at her. She said they were the same, had the same face, how could she have left her?" (Morrison 284). Beloved is angry and upset because her mother abandoned her. Beloved felt deprived of a life with her mother and siblings. This statement is also an example of how Sethe's past continues to plague her present life. Sethe is free, but still has to deal with past psychological bondage from her slavery days. Beloved represented Sethe's past life of bondage because she was born into slavery. Denver represented her current freedom and bright future because she was born during a time of escaping to freedom. Finally, Morrison's novel revealed the journey of Sethe and

her family members from bondage to freedom as they left Sweet Home and rode into 124 Bluestone Road. Morrison demonstrated in her novel how her characters past continued to follow them into their future to prevent them from being free. After the slaves were set free by the Emancipation Act, the oppressors did not want to set them free.

Chapter III: Biographies and Influences of Alice Walker and Toni Morrison with Purpose  
of Neo-Slave Narratives within *The Color Purple* and *Beloved*

Part I. Literary Influences of Alice Walker, and Purpose of Neo-Slave Narratives  
within *The Color Purple*

Author and literary critic Carmen Gillespie discusses the illustrious life of Alice Malsenior Walker. She mentions, Walker is a novelist, poet and activist. She was born on February 9, 1944 to the sharecropper parents of William Lee Walker and Minnie Lou Grant Walker in Eatonton, Georgia. Gillespie also writes, “As a baby, Walker won a church contest as the most beautiful infant, an event that set the stage for her early sense of exceptionalism and self-confidence” (3). With this statement, Gillespie is sharing one of the motivations for Walker’s future as a novelist, poet and activist. Winning such awards in life helps build character and self-esteem within a person. Walker was heavily influenced by her family to read and write. Walker was involved in an accident with one of her brothers, where she was shot in her right eye. Due to the accident, Walker lost vision in her right eye. Due to the injury of her eye, Walker was lead into a life of reading books. Writing helped Walker to release the emotions she was experiencing from the incident. She felt alone and separated because her brothers were not punished for injuring her eye. Gillespie further says, “Walker has maintained that the accident was a catalyst for her retreat into the world of books and to the less-conspicuous expressive venue of writing, particularly of composing poetry” (4). This incident led her to the wonderful world of authorship which caused her to write great works like *The Color Purple*. Also, this incident caused her to retreat from the public eye and therefore, she began to read

many books which would propel her career into the literary field. Carmen also mentions that Mrs. Minnie Lou Walker inspired the creativity of her daughter Alice and therefore she excelled in school and was the prom queen and valedictorian of her high school. Walker furthered her education at the famous Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia by way of a scholarship (5). Gillespie further writes, “While at Spelman, a historically black women’s institution, Walker became involved in the heady and escalating Civil Rights Movement, the activism of which had a particular resonance in Atlanta” (5). Spelman College helped propel Walker as an activist and novelist. Also, her experience working with the Civil Rights Movement catapults her into expressing the racial injustices suffered by her family, community and African Americans throughout the nation within her literary works. Walker has written several fictional novels, essays and collections of poetry. She is famously known for her novel *The Color Purple* (3-4). *The Color Purple* reveals fictional accounts of bondage through its African American characters.

In addition to Gillespie, author Gerri Bates further discusses the illustrious life of Alice Walker. Walker’s life was heavily influenced by her church, Wards Chapel African Methodist Episcopal. Bates states, “This edifice was the sacred space for Christian rituals, prayers, and songs, and the place where the congregation welcomed the first Easter speech of an outgoing girl who loved to recite before audiences as if her performance were a rite of passage or an initiation into a world of literary and creative forces” (3). The activities Walker was involved in at church helped propel her into a future of writing. Also, the release of the Easter speech helped Walker to stand comfortable in front of a crowd. Walker’s family and church are stepping stones to her

wonderful career in writing literature. Walker was the youngest of eight children and at times struggled in her relationship with her siblings. Bates writes,

After the incident where Walker's eye was injured by one of her brothers, their relationship began to shift. Walker's brothers treated her with cruel, somewhat typical male sibling jesting. She grew up with four of them but played mostly with the two who were two and four years older than she, Curtis and Robert...Walker struggled to become close to her two older sisters Molly and Ruth. As a child she felt that Ruth suffered needlessly because of their father's short-tempered negative verbiage toward her, causing Ruth to escape the family home at the first opportunity-marriage...However, Walker again felt a surge of emotional pain when she learned that Molly was ashamed of the family, felt disdain for their provincial mores, and thought them unworthy of meeting her acquaintances. What Walker learned was that her sisterhood with them required her comprehension of the oppression of women. Once she understood the limits and the extremes of sisterhood, she moved forward in her relationships with her sisters. (6-7)

The life experiences that Walker endured with her siblings helped her in her understanding of relationships with women. It also revealed how to deal with oppression. Walker's relationship with her sisters is relatable to the characters in some of her literary works. For example, Walker encounters the concept of oppression through her sisters, and the female characters in *The Color Purple* suffered from oppression in their storylines. Many times Walker expressed her life story written within her literary works.

Bates further discusses how Walker's life was affected living in the South.

Walker compared her life on her family's plantation to slavery. She believed the sharecropping system was worse than slavery because her parents were sharecroppers and they struggled financially. Bates writes,

The disenfranchisement of former slaves after the Civil War created a system under Reconstruction that took exploitation to a new level. Under slavery people worked and were never paid. Under the sharecropping system former slaves worked and were rarely paid and ended up in debt. Under slavery owners had to make some meager provisions for the slaves, supplying them with annual rations of inferior food and clothing. Under the sharecropping system former slaves received nothing. People like Walker's parents labored hard but were never out of debt to the employers whose land they worked and lived on. (8)

Living on the Walker's plantation was like living in slavery because her family was in debt as if they were slaves. Walker felt like she was in slavery due to the treatment of her family in the South. In spite of slavery being abolished, Walker's family still suffered from the effects of slavery as it related to provisions for her family. As Walker's family endured this treatment in the South, once again she includes the storyline into her literary works such as *The Color Purple*. Also, parts of the protagonist Celie's life from the novel are similar to actual events of Walker's life.

As Bates continues the life story of Walker, she discusses her college life at Spelman College and Sarah Lawrence College. Walker was awarded a 'rehabilitation' scholarship to Spelman due to her graduating as valedictorian of her high school. Walker

got involved in demonstrations and protests to help change a “repressive social, political, and economic apartheid system” (9). Walker wanted to make a difference in society as it relates to justice in her society. Walker and her family grew up in poverty in the South and desired to see change for African Americans. Meanwhile, Walker was influenced by two of her professors at Spelman. Bates states, “Howard Zinn, historian, activist, and author, mentored Walker at Spelman. He writes about history from the viewpoint of the victims instead of the victors. His lessons in civil disobedience influenced Walker’s approach to protest” (10). In preference to this statement, the influence and mentoring of Zinn, helped propel Walker to become the activist that she is today. He also helped activate the passion within her to push for equal rights. Just as Zinn focused on the victims of a story, Walker also focused on Celie, the victim, in *The Color Purple*. Zinn’s writing techniques were very influential upon Walker’s writing style.

Bates continues to describe the influence of Walker’s professors. Bates says, “Staughton Lynd, historian, activist, and author, also mentored Walker at Spelman, encouraging her to stay focused and pursue her academics...Professor Staughton Lynd became an important part of Walker’s academics and her politics” (10). Lynd inspired Walker to continue with her educational studies in spite of what’s happening in the world. Walker’s connection with Zinn and Lynd would inspire her throughout her college tenure and into her literature career. The encouragement from a professor can motivate and help stimulate the greatness inside of a student. Likewise, Walker had a strong political stand due to the influence from her professor, and from her childhood growing up in the South. Although Walker was greatly mentored and influenced by Zinn and Lynd, she transferred to Sarah Lawrence College in 1964 receiving a scholarship and

graduating with her Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Arts in 1966. Bates states that Walker's educational experience was very rewarding and insightful (10). Bates shares in her article the life of Alice Walker as it relates to her childhood, literary works and influences that helped launch her into adulthood and her career. Also, as Bates has written about the life of Walker, she reveals how her experiences led her to write about Neo-Slave Narratives. Walker married Jewish activist and law student Melvyn Rosenman Leventhal on March 17, 1967 and they lived in Mississippi where they battled racial injustices. They have a daughter Rebecca Grant Leventhal who was born on November 17, 1969.

As author Bates discusses Walker's childhood and educational background, she further discusses her literary career. Walker has written many fiction and nonfiction novels, poetry and children books. Her most famous novel is *The Color Purple*. Walker was very active in her academic and literary career,

Jackson State College in Jackson, Mississippi offered Walker Writer-in-Residence in Black Studies in 1968-69...She was Writer-in-Residence at Tougaloo College in Tougaloo, Mississippi in 1970-71 and Lecturer in Literature at both Wellesley College in Wellesley, Massachusetts and University of Massachusetts, Boston, in 1972-73. At Wellesley Walker created one of the first courses on African American women writers in the United States, which led to her discovery of writer Zora Neale Hurston... A naturalist, Walker founded Wild Trees Press in Navarro, California in 1984 with a mission to publish the creative works of unknown writers... She was Bread Loaf Writers' Conference Scholar in 1966. Walker became Merrill Writing Fellow in 1966-67 and McDowell Colony Fellow in 1967.

That same year she won the *American Scholar* essay contest for her piece on the Civil Rights movement. In 1969 she received a National Endowment for the Arts grant...In addition, she received the National Book Critics Circle Award nomination for *The Color Purple*, the American Book Award for *The Color Purple*, and the Pulitzer Prize for *The Color Purple* in 1983...In 1989 she received the Langston Hughes Award from New York City College and the Nora Astorga Leadership Award. (Bates 16-18)

From this passage, it shows that Walker was a very influential poet, activist and author in the literary field. Winning the various awards displays the prominence in writing for Walker. She received awards and was offered writer positions from various colleges and universities to demonstrate her prolific ability in writing. Also, these various colleges recognized the artistic and creative arts within Walker to write a story and therefore *The Color Purple* was awarded with three such awards. Walker has inspired many collegiate institutions and people throughout her life. This passage reveals how influential Walker was to the academic world.

I will discuss the purpose of Alice Walker using Neo-Slave Narratives in *The Color Purple*. Author and literary critic Tony Gentry wrote a book on the life of Alice Walker where he discusses her childhood, college life, married life, involvement with the Civil Rights Movement and her literature career. Based on some trials and tribulations that Walker faced, she wrote books and poetry resembling events in her life. I learned that Walker's literary works of *Living by the Word* and *To Hell with Dying* reflect certain struggles of her life. For example, Walker toured Africa in the summer of 1964 and

returned to school with an unwanted pregnancy which led to an abortion. After the abortion, Walker became suicidal, sleeping with a razor blade under her pillow. Walker received noticed that a family friend, Mr. Sweet, had died. Walker describes Mr. Sweet, “he was an artist...He went deep into his own pain and brought out words and music that made us happy, made us feel empathy for anyone in trouble, made us think, she explained in *Living by the Word*” (Gentry 16). In regards to this statement, Mr. Sweet was very influential in her childhood. He was an artist that inspired her to write as she went through the pain in her life. Sweet also helped propel Walker to go beyond what she was feeling and find a place of peace. Also, Walker’s *Living by the Word* was influenced by the life of Sweet as he struggled as a musician. In addition, Gentry writes:

Talking about Mr. Sweet made Walker understand how much she wanted to be an artist, too. That afternoon, she closed the door of the guest room and wrote a short story in honor of old Mr. Sweet. As she recalled years later, ‘I wrote the story with tears pouring down my cheeks. I was grief-stricken, I was crazed. I was fighting for my own life.’ As if to end the private debate that had raged within her for weeks, she entitled the story ‘To Hell with Dying.’ When she finished the tale, she put the razor blade that she had been keeping under her pillow back in her toilet kit where it belonged. (17)

In reference to this statement, Gentry shares how the death of Sweet impacted Walker to live. Sweet taught Walker to push past her pain and find happiness. Although slaves suffered physical, sexual, mental and psychological pain from their slave masters, they pushed past their anguish to find some kind of peace in the midst of their horrible

situation. Walker was filled with grief by the death of Sweet, but strived to write a story that saved her own life from suicide. Also, just as the slaves went to church to meet God and find peace during slavery, Walker turned to the art of writing to find the joy that would overpower the pain. In spite of Walker being filled with grief from the death of Sweet, she pushed past her feelings in order to write. Slaves would go off into the forest and sing songs and talk to God while in slavery.

Walker was heavily influenced by the life and works of Harlem Renaissance author, Zora Neale Hurston. Literary critic Gentry describes the influence of Hurston upon the life of Walker. In 1972, Walker and her daughter Jessica arrived to Wellesley College so she could teach a women's studies course focused on neglected female writers such as Hurston. She taught her students that the creative and poetic language of women is just as powerful as the language of men. Gentry says,

The novels of the Harlem Renaissance author Zora Neale Hurston, which Walker had first encountered three years earlier, were so funny, poignant, tragic, and full of life that she wished she had written them all. Her favorites were the autobiographical *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Mules and Men*, a novel that included many of the same folktales Walker had heard from her parents as a child...Hurston was a writer who could interest white teenagers and black workingmen alike, for she wrote about field hands, conjure women, preachers, and thieves in a way that made their stories seem vitally important...Walker loved the way Hurston 'took the trouble to capture the beauty of rural black expression. She saw poetry where other writers merely saw failure to cope with English.' At last,

Walker had found a mentor who wrote as she herself did. More than ever, she was determined to bring Hurston's work-- and that of other neglected woman writers—into the public eye. (Gentry 58-9)

In reference to this statement, Gentry explains how much Walker is influenced by Hurston in her different scopes of writing. Hurston not only wrote about the good, but also the bad as it concerns the character traits of people. Also, Hurston made everybody's story important as if all people are counted equal. As history states, only white people were considered significant. Black people did not have a voice and were degraded and treated inhumanely. Celie is treated like a slave instead of a daughter or wife. In Walker's novel, Celie is treated inhumanely and does not have a voice at the beginning of the novel, but she finds her voice through her letters to God. Shug encourages Celie to stand up to Mr. \_ and fight back. Walker wrote about these types of stories because no matter their social status, everyone is important. Walker is further sharing the message of the less fortunate people to share it with the world.

Alice Walker displays unification with the women in her novel. Walker established a strong bond between her female characters to demonstrate the unity and strength between African American women. Thus, when women unify, they help to encourage one another. According to literary critic Charles Proudfit, "This 'female bonding,' which occurs over an extended period of time, enables Celie—a depressed survivor-victim of parent loss, emotional and physical neglect, rape, incest, trauma, and spousal abuse—to resume her arrested development...that was thwarted in infancy and early adolescence" (90). In other words, just as the female slaves' endured humiliation during slavery, the women bonded to help reinforce relationships with one another as

they suffered from rape and incest from their slave masters. As a matter of fact during slavery, children and husbands were snatched and sold away from their mothers and husbands. In light of these types of incidents, the women bonded together to empower one another.

Another key point of Walker's novel is revealed by literary author Gerri Bates, Alice Walker described in 1973 three types of African American characters excluded from the literature of the United States: physically and emotionally exploited women who lead narrow and confining lives and are often driven to insanity, psychologically exploited women who endure cultural alienation, and surviving women who achieve wholeness out of oppression and prepare spaces for other oppressed communities...*The Color Purple* explores the issues of spousal abuse, incest, lesbianism, subjugation, and dehumanization... This novel chronicles Celie's growth from a dependent, defeated personality to an independent, liberated woman with purpose and drive. (89)

Walker reveals the social injustices of African American women. She also reveals the brutality of women suffered by their father and husband. Walker displays how women can go from victim to victor in spite of the abusiveness from their men. In spite of the black female slaves being humiliated, dejected and brutalized; they found a way to survive through female bonding and their faith in God. Furthermore, Celie was alienated from her own parents due to the exploited sexism from her step-father. Walker also exposes to her audience the inhumane issues of women that were still occurring in the twentieth century as if it was still during the days of slavery. Furthermore, Walker gives

African American women a voice in her stories by exposing the atrocities of their abuse because during slavery they did not have a voice.

Chapter III: Biographies and Influences of Alice Walker and Toni Morrison with Purpose  
of Neo-Slave Narratives within *The Color Purple* and *Beloved*

Part II. Literary Influences of Toni Morrison, and Purpose of Neo-Slave  
Narratives within *Beloved*

Author and literary critic Carmen Gillespie also discusses the illustrious life of Toni Morrison. She mentions that Toni Morrison was born on February 18, 1931 with the name of Chloe Ardelia Wofford in Lorain, Ohio. Her parents are George Wofford and Ella Ramah Willis and her maternal grandparents are Ardella and John Solomon Willis. Her grandparents were farmers from the South who abandoned their home due to racism and their economic status. They left Alabama and relocated to Kentucky and from there they finally settled in Lorain, Ohio. Morrison's family greatly influenced her development as a writer. Gillespie also says, "Between her father and mother's response to the world they lived in and her grandparent's stories, Morrison's world was richly imbued with a sense of place, community, purpose, and identity that would, in time, infuse the rich fabric of her imaginative, eventually narrative, universe" (4). Morrison's writings reflected her childhood and historical events from her family's lives. Moreover, Morrison wrote from the life experiences of her and her family. Specifically speaking, Morrison is an intelligent human being. Even though Morrison was the only African American in her first grade class; she was the only one who could read in her first grade class. In addition, Morrison excelled throughout school and was admired by her classmates and teachers. Her parents always encouraged her and her siblings to pursue education. Furthermore, Morrison worked in the Lorain Public Library as a teenager and it became one of her favorite places where she was intellectually influenced from some of

the librarians (Gillespie 5). Morrison's family and her childhood helped propel her to become the brilliant author and poet that she is today.

While in high school, Morrison admired Russian authors Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy. Admiring the Russian writers displays Morrison's depth in studying literature. In addition to the Russian authors, Morrison also studied with author Alain Locke and the poet Sterling Brown who were influential in her literary life. Morrison graduated from high school in 1949 and pursued her college degree at Howard University where she majored in English and minored in Classics. After graduating from Howard, she attended Cornell University to receive her Master's Degree in Literature. Moreover, she graduated in 1955 and began her tenure as a university professor at Texas Southern University. She then returned to Howard University in 1957 where she met her husband Harold Morrison. They had two sons Harold Ford and Kevin Slade. Meanwhile, Morrison changed her name to Toni while at Howard University. Also, Morrison became the first African American woman to become senior editor at Random House Publishing Company where she was responsible for such writers as Angela Davis, Toni Cade Bambara, Henry Dumas and Michelle Cliff. Meanwhile, Morrison was a member of a writer's group while on staff at Howard, and she began the writing of her first novel *The Bluest Eye* which was written in 1970. Furthermore, Morrison wrote *Beloved* in 1987 and it won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988 and was a finalist in 1987 for the National Book Award. Moreover, the story of former slave Margaret Garner was an inspiration for Morrison's *Beloved* (6-8). Everything concerning Morrison's education and work led to the writing of many novels and poems. In addition to *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*, Morrison wrote other great fiction books such as, *Love, Song of Solomon, Sula* and *Tar*

*Baby*, just to name a few. Her non-fictional works include *The Dancing Mind* and *Playing in the Dark*. Morrison's literary works express the life experiences of African Americans from their struggles in slavery unto their emancipation.

Literary critic Lisa R. Rhodes describes the effects of Morrison's works in the literature field,

Her works had helped to change the face of American literature-a literature that once told only the conquests of white men with white women as minor characters. Morrison's work introduced lyrical prose, storytelling, African-American folklore, and African-American history to the American literary establishment. African-American literature, also dominated by male characters, was similarly changed when Morrison introduced the female point of view and female sensitivities-and made them credible. (9)

Rhodes expresses the importance of Morrison's work and the effect it has on not only African American literature, but American literature as well. In previous literature times, the white male was the dominant subject, but Morrison highlights the female who was plagued as the insignificant gender. Morrison gives a voice to the female gender with powerful messages concerning bonds between mother and daughter, sisters, and friends. Additionally, Morrison's storytelling stems from her parents and grandparents as they faced racism and oppression in the South. Also, Sethe is the female protagonist in the novel where her storyline is made prevalent due to her escape from the cruel treatment of the male gender. Because of the dominant white slave master's abuse, Sethe is forced to speak loudly with her escape to freedom.

Morrison was presented with honorary degrees and other prestigious honors for her works. Literary critic Maureen N. Eke mentions these prestigious awards and honors presented to Morrison written in a biography about Morrison,

Morrison received honorary degrees from American and international Universities and colleges. In 2003, for example, she received the Docteur Honoris Causa from Ecole Normale Superieure, Paris, France. In 2005, she was awarded a Doctor of Letters Degree by Oxford University, England, and , in 2006, an Honorary Doctorate of Letters by the Sorbonne in Paris, France. In 2009, Morrison received the Norman Mailer Prize for Lifetime Achievement, and in 2012, she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, awarded by President Barack Obama. (22)

In regards to this statement, Eke is displaying how influential Morrison is to various universities and colleges. Her literary works have reached the masses not only in the United States, but also in France and England. In addition, to be honored with the Presidential Medal of Freedom from the President Barack H. Obama II of the United States is truly amazing. Morrison's awards show the depth of her work to reach beyond the classroom. In addition to all of the awards and accolades that Morrison received, she was also admired by African American talk show host, Oprah Winfrey. Many of Morrison's novels including *Beloved* were chosen for the Oprah Winfrey Book Club which caused her popularity to expand beyond her imagination. Furthermore, Winfrey produced a much anticipated film of the novel *Beloved* (Rhodes 100). In spite of her existing success from her works, Morrison reaches many more women readers because of Winfrey and her Book Club.

I will discuss the purpose of Morrison using Neo-Slave Narratives within *Beloved*. According to author and literary critic Rhodes, Morrison based *Beloved* on the story of a former slave Margaret Garner, who escaped slavery with her husband and children in Kentucky to relocate to Ohio. After arriving to Ohio, Garner attempted to kill her four children to prevent from being recaptured by her slave master. Garner killed one of her daughters by slitting her throat and she injured the other children, but they survived. Shortly after, they were caught and returned to her slave master's plantation (Rhodes 76). Morrison used this story because it is the plight of so many African Americans who suffered from enslavement. Morrison wanted her audience to hear about the atrocities that so many African Americans endured. The slaves' stories have been silenced by so many writers and Morrison wanted their stories to be the world. By sharing the life experiences of those who suffered in slavery, Morrison was giving a voice to the silent horrific tragedies of the slaves. African Americans were not allowed to have a voice during enslavement because they were treated as property and not as human beings. By the same token, slaves did not have the same rights and privileges as white people. Garner's story is just of many more that needs to be given a voice to be heard.

In addition to the viewpoint of critic Rhodes, literary critic Krumholz shares her meaning of the message behind *Beloved*. Krumholz states, "Toni Morrison's *Beloved* reconceptualizes American history...Morrison constructs history through the acts and consciousness of African- American slaves rather than through the perspective of the dominant white social classes" (107). Krumholz is stating that Morrison based her novel on the historical accounts of African American slavery instead of the dominance that was owned by the white slave masters. In other words, it was more important to hear about

the suffrage of black people instead of the control of the slave masters. The life experiences of African Americans needed to be shared for the world to hear. Also, if the story had of been told through the dominant white class, the value of a black human life would not have been shared. The slave master's point of view would express the importance of slaves working the land for economic growth instead of the horrific beatings and rapes that the slaves endured.

Literary critic Joseph McLaren further discusses the intent of Morrison's novel *Beloved*. McLaren's viewpoints are similar to that of critic Krumholz. McLaren writes,

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* can be classified as a neo-slave narrative that retells a particular history of the 'peculiar institution,' the term used by Kenneth Stampp to describe slavery in the United States. The historical archive of nineteenth-century slavery is extensive, and Morrison's choice of the Margaret Garner story suggests its emblematic possibilities and supports what Wilfred Samuels and Clenora Hudson-Weems refer to as showing the workings of the plantocracy that denied...basic human and political rights...Although *Beloved* can stand as a story of personal relationships and a black family's torn legacy, it also can serve as a corollary to the various histories of slavery. (95)

With this statement, McLaren is releasing a shared view of historical accounts of the vicious acts impended upon African Americans. Also, his statement further reveals the importance of African American relationships. It further reveals how broken relationship can follow a family for many generations. Moreover, *Beloved* relates to slavery because it

portrays the actual sufferings of millions of African Americans for over four hundred years.

## Chapter IV: Reflections and Implications

Authors, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison use Neo-Slave Narratives within their literary works to display the atrocious accounts of slavery suffered by African Americans. The selected novels for my thesis are *The Color Purple* and *Beloved*. Although the Emancipation Proclamation Act of 1863 abolishes slavery, African Americans still suffered psychologically, economically and socially as Walker and Morrison examine the plight of slavery through the female experience. The Emancipation Proclamation was an order established by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 as America was in the Civil War. The Proclamation declared “that all persons held as slaves” within the rebellious states “are, and henceforward shall be free.” (US National Archives 1). Although the Proclamation claims freedom for slaves, it was for specific states and territories. The Proclamation furthered opened the door for African American men to enter into the Armed forces. Although the Proclamation abolishes slavery, The Neo-Slave Narratives are fictional tales of slavery told through the narrators of a novel. Also, another definition is the journey from bondage to freedom that the characters go through within the novel. These authors also expressed the importance of relationships within their novels. Walker illustrates in her novel how the protagonist Celie suffers from male dominant aggression. The African American women suffer physical, sexual, mental and psychological forms of servitude. Walker also demonstrates how her female characters overcome the adversity of oppression and abuse to survive. Celie’s life is one of sexual entrapment suffered at the hands of her step-father and husband. Celie is treated by her male family members, just like slaves were treated by their white slave master. Celie never got to experience a childhood due to the repeated rapes by her step-father. Women

in slavery had to deal with being raped over and over by their white slave masters. The parent-child relationship is destroyed between Celie and her parents due to the sexual oppression from the step-father. Walker also examines the oppression of black men upon black women as it relates to parental relationships.

Slave masters broke up relationships between the slaves for fear of empowerment. The slave masters wanted the slaves to feel alone and weak, so they would break up their families by selling them off to other plantations. The masters realized there is strength in numbers and their job was to keep the slaves under control. Within the novel, Mr. \_\_\_ Put Nettie out of the house because he could not have his way with her sexually. Nettie is the one person that loved Celie and he separated them by evicting Nettie from the house. In the case, Mr. \_\_\_ is acting just like a white slave master. Mr. \_\_\_ treatment of Celie was horrific. He treated her like an animal as if she was in slavery. Furthermore, Celie's plight from servitude to emancipation is a long process, but she eventually reaches her place of freedom. In the beginning of the novel, the male was dominant over the female, but at the end, Celie found her voice and she was no longer controlled by Mr. \_\_\_. Celie started out as a victim, but was victorious at the end of the novel. Likewise, the oppressor desires to keep the oppressed in an abusive state. Also, the oppressor wants to keep the person in enslavement and bound by fear. Celie does become fearful of her step-father and husband due to the abusive behavior bestowed upon her body. Furthermore, the women in Walker's novel form a relationship which causes Celie to be free. Walker reveals in her novel, the importance of female relationships to encourage one another to be strong.

In addition, Morrison's characters are actually slaves and escape from their place of enslavement in Kentucky to a place of freedom in Ohio. Morrison reveals the Neo-

Slave Narratives through the life of Sethe and her family within the novel. Sethe and her children escape from the Sweet Home plantation to Ohio. She planned to kill all of her children, but only killed her eldest daughter because her slave master arrived to the house to reclaim his runaway slaves. Unfortunately, Sethe kills her oldest daughter Beloved to prevent the family from being returned to a life of enslavement. The death of her daughter haunts her and her family for about eighteen years until her reincarnated daughter returns. Beloved's return is an example of Sethe having to face her past life and actions. Also, the physical scars on Sethe's back are a constant physical and mental reminder of slavery. Sethe learns that she cannot run away from her past, because her daughter Beloved is her past. Sethe's memory is a key component to her suppressed memory. Likewise, slaves continue to suffer from repressed thoughts and memories due to their enslavement.

The purpose of the Neo-Slave Narrative within *The Color Purple* and *Beloved* examined the atrocities of slavery. Walker loosely based some of her literary works upon the events in her life. Walker wanted to give a voice to those that had been quiet. As we know during slavery, only the white people were considered significant. She also believed that everyone was important and deserves to be heard. Walker displayed unification with her female characters. With Morrison, her novel is based on a former slave Margaret Garner who escapes from slavery in Kentucky and heads to Ohio for freedom. The purpose of *Beloved* demonstrates the plight of many African Americans who suffered in slavery. Morrison wanted to give the silent black voice a platform to finally speak of the injustices suffered for so many years. In spite of the abolishment of slavery, African Americans still were not considered equal to their white brothers and

sisters. African Americans could not vote, segregation existed throughout the country and they were not considered US citizens. Walker and Morrison desire to give a voice to the silent African Americans who have been enslaved. Another important message delivered by the authors demonstrates the slaves going from victims to victors.

My purpose for writing my thesis on Neo-Slave Narratives involves giving African American women a voice to be heard. The women have a voice and need to be heard. There are many stories that need to be told that are a part of the African American history. It is important for a people to know and understand their culture. Neo-Slave Narratives express untold stories and hidden events that need to be shared with the world. Alice Walker and Toni Morrison are extraordinary writers who give a voice to the silent African American women. They disclose the life experiences of women who have a story to tell. Furthermore, Walker and Morrison's literary works are influenced by their own life experiences as well.

Neo-Slave Narratives are contemporary accounts of slavery in fictional works; Alice Walker and Toni Morrison expressed the narratives in their novels as they bring light to the female experience. The female in *The Color Purple* was abused in various ways by family members whom are supposed to spread love. The female was abused in such a way due to the psychological effects of slavery. The female in *Beloved* was enslaved in slavery and escaped, but yet many years later her mind is still in bondage due to the psychological effects of slavery. Slavery is a very heinous act and no person should have to experience this horrific situation. Walker and Morrison wrote about the narratives to give African Americans a voice in a world where they once were not considered to be human beings. Although the Declaration of Independence states that all

men are equal, African Americans were not free. African Americans were enslaved in bondage for many years. African Americans were established as property and not people. White people believed they were the superior race over blacks.

Although the Emancipation Proclamation abolishes slavery, no one should still be suffering from slavery because we are all free. If slavery had not been set in place, our country may not be suffering from racism. Slavery left a bad impact on the world of relationships due to the cruelty of the white race upon the black race. Furthermore, if racism can be dismissed from our hearts as a people, then the healing process from slavery can begin in our country.

## Works Cited

- Babb, Valerie. "Women and Words: Articulating the Self in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *The Color Purple*." *Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston: The Common Bond*. Ed. Lillie P. Howard. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993. 83-94. Print.
- Bates, Gerri. *Alice Walker: A Critical Companion*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005. Print.
- Bell, Bernard W. "Beloved: A Womanist Neo-Slave Narrative; or Multivocal Remembrances of Things Past." *African American Review* 26.1 (1992): 1-10. Print.
- Bell, Bernard. *The African American Novel and Its Tradition*. Amherst: Univ of Mass Press, 1987. Print.
- Boesenberg, Eva. *Gender-Voice-Vernacular: The Formation of Female Subjectivity in Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker*. Germany: Heidelberg, 1999. Print.
- Capuano, Peter J. "Truth in Timbre: Morrison's Extension of Slave Narrative Song in *Beloved*." *African American Review* 37.1 (2003): 95-103. Print.
- Christian, Barbara T. "Walker's Childhood, Education, and Crusade for African American Women." *Women's Issues in Alice Walker's The Color Purple*. Ed. Claudia Durst Johnson. Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2011. 16-23. Print.
- Eke, Maureen N. "Biography of Toni Morrison." *Critical Insights Beloved*. Ed. Maureen N. Eke. Massachusetts: Grey House Publishing, 2015. 17-23. Print.

Gates, Jr. Henry Louis. *The Classic Slave Narratives*. New York: Penguin Group, 1987  
Print.

Gentry, Tony. *Alice Walker*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1993. Print.

Gillespie, Carmen. *Critical Companion to Toni Morrison*. New York: Infobase  
Publishing, 2008. Print.

Gillespie, Carmen. *A Critical Companion to Alice Walker*. New York: Hermitage  
Publishing, 2011. Print.

Henderson, Mae G. "Walker Revises Traditional Gender Rules." *Women's Issues in Alice  
Walker's The Color Purple*. Ed. Claudia Durst Johnson. Detroit: Greenhaven  
Press, 2011. 65-73. Print.

Hudson-Weems, Clenora. "The Tripartite Plight of African-American Women as  
Reflected in The Novels of Hurston and Walker." *Journal of Black Studies*. 20.2  
(1989): 192-207. Print.

Johnson, Yvonne. *The Voices of African American Women*. New York: Peter Lang  
Publishing, 1998. Print.

Khaleghi, Mahboobeh. "Reclaiming Identity through the Community: A Study of Toni  
Morrison's *Beloved* and a *Mercy*." *International Journal of English and  
Education* 1.2 (2012): 272-280. Print.

Krumholz, Linda. "The Ghosts of Slavery: Historical Recovery in Toni Morrison's  
*Beloved*." *African American Review* 26.3 (1992): 395-408. Print.

M'Baye, Babacar. "Morrison Examines the Divisive Impact of Racial Oppression."  
*Slavery In Toni Morrison's Beloved*. Ed. Dedria Bryfonski. Detroit: Greenhaven  
Press, 2012. 117-124. Print.

- McLaren, Joseph. "Slavery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *Critical Insights Beloved*. Ed. Maureen N. Eke. New York: Grey House Publishing, 2015. 95-110. Print.
- Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. New York: Vintage Int'l, 1987. Print.
- Munoz-Valdivieso, Sofia. "Neo-Slave Narratives in Contemporary Black British Fiction." *Ariel* 42 (2012): 43-59. Print.
- Parrish, Timothy L. "Imagining Slavery: Toni Morrison and Charles Johnson." *Studies in American Fiction*. 25.1 (1997): 81-100. Print.
- Proudfit, Charles L. "Celie's Search for Identity: A Psychoanalytic Developmental Reading of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*." Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008. 89-112. Print.
- Rhodes, Lisa R. *Toni Morrison Great American Writer*. New York: Grolier Publishing, 2001. Print.
- Ross, Daniel W. "Celie in the Looking Glass: The Desire for Selfhood in *The Color Purple*." *Modern Fiction Studies*. 34.1 (1988): 69-84. Print.
- Rushdy, Ashraf. *Neo-salve Narratives: The Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Print.
- Selzer, Linda. "Race and Domesticity in *The Color Purple*." *African American Review* 29.1 (1995): 67-82. Print.
- Smith, Barbara. "Sexual Oppression Unmasked." *Callaloo*. 22 (1984): 170-76. Print.
- Smith, Valerie. "Neo-Slave Narratives." *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative* Ed. Audrey Fisch. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007.

168-188. Print.

Tahir, Ary Syamanad. "Gender Violence in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*." *Journal of Language & Literature*. 11 (2014): 1-19. Print.

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. Boston: Mariner Books, 1982. Print.

Waters Dawson, Emma J. "Redemption Through Redemption of the Self in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *The Color Purple*." *Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston: The Common Bond*. Ed. Lillie P. Howard. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993. 69-82. Print.

Williams, Lisa. "The Character Beloved Depicts the Loss of Cultural Identity That Occurred During Slavery." *Slavery in Toni Morrison's Beloved*. Ed. Dedria Bryfonski. Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2012. 76-83. Print.

*The Declaration of Independence: A Transcript*. The U.S. National Archives & Records Administration. 4 July, 1776. Web. 24 Aug. 2016. [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov)

*The Emancipation Proclamation*. The U.S. National Archives & Records Administration. 1 July, 1863. Web. 24 Aug. 2016. [www.archives.org](http://www.archives.org)

## Annotated Bibliography

Babb, Valerie. "Women and Words: Articulating the Self in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *The Color Purple*." *Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston: The Common Bond*. Ed. Lillie P. Howard. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1993. 83-94. Print.

Babb's essay discusses the power of the women's words in the novel. Her essay further discusses the importance of letters between Celie and Nettie. Also, the essay expresses how the letters from sister Nettie give Celie new life and hope for a better future. Babb's essay can be utilized to further implement the purpose of the letters being in Walker's novel. My reflection on this essay is that it digs into the letter writing of the two sisters and the effects that the letters have on both sisters. Further, the letter writing projects survival in the midst of death.

Bates, Gerri. *Alice Walker: A Critical Companion*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005. Print.

Bates novel expresses the emergence of Celie from oppression and the importance of relationships of the characters. It also discusses the female relationships and the voices of the female. Bates novel further analyzes the character of Mr. \_\_\_ as an abuser of women. Bates's novel will help implement how the character of Mr. \_\_\_ is related the white slave master. It will use this source to help illuminate the similarities of the black man and the white slave master within the novel of *The Color Purple*. Bates novel is a good source for identifying acts of sexual, mental and physical abuse the women suffer at the hands of aggressive dominant male figures.

Bell, Bernard W. "Beloved: A Womanist Neo-Slave Narrative; or Multivocal

Remembrances of Things Past.” *African American Review* 26.1 (1992): 1-10.

Print.

Bernard Bell shares the story of Morrison’s protagonist Sethe in *Beloved*. He also reveals how *Beloved* examines Neo-Slave Narratives throughout its characters’ lives. Bell further demonstrates how the memory of *Beloved* continues to haunt Sethe throughout the story. Moreover, Bell defines *Beloved* as a story of Sethe’s psychological freedom and wholeness from her tragic past. Bell’s article is a supplement to the novel *Beloved* by Toni Morrison where it examines the slave narratives of the characters. Bell’s literary criticism helps give myself another point of view concerning Neo-Slave Narratives within *Beloved*. Bell’s viewpoints are helpful to writing my thesis on the Neo-Slave Narratives of Morrison’s works. In my reflection of Bell’s article, I believe it demonstrates and illuminates the Neo-Slave Narratives of the woman in *Beloved*.

Bell, Bernard. *The African American Novel and Its Tradition*. Amherst: Univ of Mass Press, 1987. Print.

Bernard Bell discusses the Neo-Slave Narrative tradition in the United States. Bell also discusses many novels from different novelists that deal with the African American tradition. He further discusses central points to the understanding of African American life and culture. Bell’s book will enhance my thesis as it relates to the history of African American culture. My reflection of this book is that it delves into the history of the ‘oral tradition’ of African Americans.

Boesenberg, Eva. *Gender-Voice-Vernacular: The Formation of Female Subjectivity in Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker*. Germany: Heidelberg, 1999. Print.

Eva Boesenberg discusses how the protagonist Celie is empowered through her friendship with another female character, Sofia. She also discusses the bond between Mr. \_\_ former lover and Celie. The relationship starts off rocky, but develops not only into a friendship but a sexual relationship as well. Boesenberg further states how Celie economic status changes where she becomes an independent woman no longer bound by her husband. Boesenberg's article will help implement the storyline of the relationships between the women characters. It will further show how the female bonding creates strength for the women in the novel as they endure their individual hardships. In my reflection of Boesenberg's article, will help supplement the writing of my thesis as I discuss the important of relationships between women.

Bouson, J. Brooks. "*Beloved* Exposes the Psychological Trauma Caused by Slavery."

*Slavery in Toni Morrison's Beloved*. Ed. Dedria Bryfonski. Michigan:

Greenhaven Press, 2012. 103-16. Print.

J. Brooks Bouson discusses the psychological aspects of slavery endured by the characters within *Beloved*. Brooks Bouson further discusses the psychological trauma which leads to a loss of identity within a person. I will utilize this source to implement the psychological effects of slavery within the novel. I believe Brooks Bouson's story will help supplement the writing of my thesis as it relates to the formation of Neo-Slave Narratives.

Capuano, Peter J. "Truth in Timbre: Morrison's Extension of Slave Narrative Song in

*Beloved*." *African American Review* 37.1 (2003): 95-103. Print.

Peter Capuano discusses the power of the slave song for African Americans during their time of enslavement. He also discusses how Morrison explores the black experience within and out of slavery for African Americans. Capuano's article will add the historical part of the slave song to my thesis as I write about the Neo-Slave Narratives of *Beloved*. His article will help advance my storyline of the Slave Narratives as well. The slave song is an important element of African Americans lives during enslavement. My reflection on this article is that it delves deep down into the history of enslavement for African Americans. The slave song had meanings that their masters did not understand.

Christian, Barbara T. "Walker's Childhood, Education, and Crusade for African American Women." *Women's Issues in Alice Walker's The Color Purple*. Ed. Claudia Durst Johnson. Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2011. 16-23. Print.

Christian's article discusses the background life of Alice Walker. It reveals also Walker's journey in Education specifically discussing her tenure at Spelman College and Sarah Lawrence College. Christian's article further reveals the criticism of the black woman writer versus the black male writer. Christian's article will help benefit the biography part of my thesis. It also further implements the subject of Black Feminism inside the novel. My reflections concerning this biography helps delve deep down into Walker's past life.

Denard, Carolyn C. "*Beloved* Shows How the Power of Love Helped Black People Survive Slavery." *Slavery in Toni Morrison's Beloved*. Ed. Dedria Bryfonski. Michigan: Greenhaven Press, 2012. 42-53. Print.

Carolyn Denard's story examines how the power of love within a family or group can benefit the survival of generation. Denard further examines the survival methods of African Americans while enslaved. Denard's story will benefit the purpose in sharing the

strength and will of a people to survive under the most horrific circumstances. I believe Denard's story is a great outside source to use in my thesis regarding survival in slavery.

Dizard, Robin. "Toni Morrison, the Slave Narratives, and Modernism." *The Massachusetts Review* 51.2 (2010): 389-405. Print.

Robin Dizard examines how Toni Morrison uses Slave Narratives within her literary works. Dizard further discusses the many Slave Narratives that Morrison has researched to help formulate her writing within her novels. Dizard's article is beneficial to the writing of my thesis as it gives historical accounts of many Slave Narratives. My thesis examines of Neo-Slave Narratives from the works of Morrison, Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston. As I reflect on Dizard's article, I can see how she uses the Slave Narratives to relate to Toni Morrison's characters within her novels.

Eke, Maureen N. "Biography of Toni Morrison." *Critical Insights Beloved*. Ed. Maureen N. Eke. Massachusetts: Grey House Publishing, 2015. 17-23. Print

Eke's article discusses the biography of Toni Morrison which includes her childhood, education and literary works. It further illuminates the prestigious awards given to Morrison. It also expresses the powerful influence Walker had on many writers. This article will help supplement the background history of Morrison's life. It further reveals the commitment of Morrison to African American history. Eke's source to the in-depth life of Toni Morrison. The source also gives a brief description into some of Morrison's other literary works that have garnered worldwide attention.

Fulweiler, Howard W. "Belonging and Freedom in Morrison's *Beloved*: Slavery, Sentimentality, And the Evolution of Consciousness." *Understanding Toni*

*Morrison's Beloved and Sula*. Eds. Solomon O. Iyasere and Marla W. Iyasere.  
New York: Whitston Publishing, 2000. 190-203. Print.

Howard Fulweiler examines the aspects of slavery and freedom within *Beloved*.

Fulweiler also examines the effects of slavery upon African Americans and the consciousness of American society. Fulweiler's story will add background information regarding slavery as it relates to the characters in *Beloved*. I can utilize Fulweiler's story to further enhance the storyline of freedom for African Americans. I believe Fulweiler's source is a great source identifying the consciousness of American society and the plight for freedom for African Americans.

Gates, Jr. Henry Louis. *The Classic Slave Narratives*. New York: Penguin Group, 1987  
Print.

Henry Louis Gates Jr discusses the slave narratives of four different people. Within his book, Gates covers the life story of Frederick Douglas in slavery. Gates further discusses the rich history of former slaves. Gates's book will add the history of slavery as it relates to my thesis on Neo-Slave Narratives. Gates's book describes the horrific tales of slavery written by each slave. Gates's book will help advance my storyline on Neo-Slave Narratives. My reflection on this material is that it contains powerful history on the slave life of four important individuals.

Gentry, Tony. *Alice Walker*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1993. Print.

Gentry's book discusses the biography of Alice Walker. It also describes some of Walker's literary works that relates to events in her family life. For example, *In Love and Trouble* discusses the love life of Walker dealing with her marriage and divorce of her

husband. I can implement the information from this book into my thesis for further details of Walker's life. My reflection of Gentry's book is that it is an excellent source for research on Walker.

George, Sheldon. "Approaching the Thing of Slavery: A Lacanian Analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *African American Review* 45.2 (2012): 115-130. Print.

Sheldon George examines the Lacanian approach to slavery as written in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. He also examines the traumatic racial past as it haunts the identity of African Americans enslaved. Sheldon's article will provide extensive information to my thesis regarding the imaginary and symbolic emphasis of slavery within *Beloved*. Sheldon's article further expands my knowledge on Jacques Lacan's Theory and how he relates it to slavery in *Beloved*. My reflection on this article causes me to see how Sheldon uses the Lacanian Theory concerning Slave Narratives within *Beloved*.

Gillespie, Carmen. *Critical Companion to Toni Morrison*. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008. Print.

Carmen Gillespie examines many of Toni Morrison's literary works within this book. As it relates to *Beloved*, Gillespie also examines the entire novel chapter by chapter giving her synopsis on each character. Gillespie further gives her critical commentary as it relates to the meaning of the title of the novel. I will utilize Gillespie's book to add critical commentary to my thesis regarding the characters and how it all relates to Slave Narratives. Gillespie's book is a great outside source to enhance one's paper on several of Morrison's novels.

Gillespie, Carmen. *A Critical Companion to Alice Walker*. New York: Hermitage

Publishing, 2011. Print.

Carmen Gillespie examines the life and influences of author Alice Walker. Gillespie also examines the various literary works of Walker. I will utilize Gillespie's source to release background information regarding Alice Walker. I will further utilize this source to implement the forms of slavery found within the novel. I believe Gillespie's book is an informative source to enhance my thesis on Neo-Slave Narratives.

Heglar, Charles J. "Named and Namelessness: Alice Walker's Pattern of Surnames in *The Color Purple*." *ANQ* 13.1 (2000): 38-41. Print.

Charles Heglar explains in his opinion the purpose of names and namelessness amongst the characters within *The Color Purple*. Heglar further explains how the erasing of the male names strips them of their patriarchal authority. Heglar's article will benefit my thesis by its formative information on patriarchal authority identified within *The Color Purple*. My reflection of Heglar's article is that it provides the male domination which is a source of control. This type of control falls into the defining aspect of Slave Narratives.

Henderson, Mae G. "Walker Revises Traditional Gender Rules." *Women's Issues in Alice Walker's The Color Purple*. Ed. Claudia Durst Johnson. Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2011. 65-73. Print.

Henderson's article describes how the values of slavery suppress the African American women within the novel. It also expresses the dominance of the patriarchs of the family. It further discusses the degradation of women not only in the American South, but also in Africa. Henderson's article will help implement the sad saga of the abuse of African American women. It further expresses the revision of the gender roles as Celie is

triumphant at the end of the novel. Henderson's article will help catapult the issues of slavery as it relates to our African American people.

Holden-Kirwan, Jennifer L. "Looking into the Self That is No Self: An Examination Of Subjectivity in *Beloved*." *African American Review* 32.3 (1998): 415-426. Print.

Jennifer Holden-Kirwan examines the subjectivity in *Beloved* as it relates to the characters especially the protagonist Sethe. Holden-Kirwan also examines the repression of memory for Sethe regarding the death of her daughter. Holden-Kirwan's article can be used to highlight the effects of slavery upon the characters in *Beloved*. Her article can further examine the loss and gain of identity within the novel. In my opinion Holden-Kirwan has written a great article as it relates to identity within a person.

Holden, Jennifer L. "Slavery Robbed African Americans of Their Personal Identities." *Slavery in Toni Morrison's Beloved*. Ed. Dedria Bryfonski. Michigan: Greenhaven Press, 2012. 91-102. Print.

Jennifer Holden examines how slavery impacted African Americans concerning their identities. Holden further examines the dislocation of family and how they were separated from their own lands. Holden's story can be utilized to share the information concerning African Americans and their loss of possessions. I believe Holden's story will help catapult my thesis as it relates to loss and identity within a community of people.

Hudson-Weems, Clenora. "The Tripartite Plight of African-American Women as Reflected in The Novels of Hurston and Walker." *Journal of Black Studies*. 20.2 (1989): 192-207. Print.

Hudson-Weems article discusses the history of African American women as they face oppression through racism, classism and sexism. It also explores the plight of Sofia as she goes from a free woman to an imprisoned woman. It further discusses how the women can overcome the oppression subjected by their oppressors. Hudson-Weems article can be used to further implement my thesis dealing with the oppression of women in Walker's novels. My reflection of this article is that it is extra information to express the plight of the African American women.

Hudson-Weems, Clenora, and Wilfred D. Samuels "Slavery Damaged the Mother-Child Relationship." *Slavery in Toni Morrison's Beloved*. Ed. Dedria Bryfonski. Michigan: Greenhaven Press, 2012. 125-36. Print.

Hudson-Weems and Samuels's examines the effects of slavery upon the family. They further pinpoint how slavery impacts the mother to daughter relationship within *Beloved*. I will utilize Hudson-Weems and Samuels's story to bring forth insight on the psychological effects of slavery and how it impacts the tradition of family. Hudson-Weems and Samuels's story is a great source of background information as it relates to the effects of slavery.

Johnson, Yvonne. *The Voices of African American Women*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1998. Print.

Johnson's article expresses the lack of the woman's voice within the character Celie as she has been shut down by her step-father as well as her husband. The article also discusses the powerlessness of Southern black women within Walker's novel. It further discusses black women globally through many of Walker's literary works. Johnson's article will enhance my thesis as it relates to the voice and non-voice of African

American women enslaved. My reflection is that this article is an excellent source to draw upon for the plight of women throughout Walker's literary works.

Juneja, Om P. "The Purple Colour of Walker Women: Their Journey from Slavery to Liberation." *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008. 79-88. Print.

Om Juneja examines the journey of her female protagonist plight from slavery to freedom. Juneja further examines the purpose behind Walker writing *The Color Purple*. I can implement Juneja's story into my thesis regarding the journey of the protagonist as they strive from slavery to freedom. I can further implement this story as it shares the identity struggle within the characters of *The Color Purple*. Juneja's story is an excellent source that will enhance one's paper as it relates to African Americans journey from slavery to freedom.

Kastor, Elizabeth. "Toni Morrison's *Beloved* Country: The Writer and her Haunting Tale of Slavery." Ed. Barbara H. Solomon. New York: G.K. Hall & Co, 1998. 53-58. Print.

Elizabeth Kastor examines Morrison as she writes *Beloved*. Kastor also examines the plight behind Morrison writing this novel. Kastor further reveals some background information on Morrison and her purposes for writing her literary works. Kastor's story will enhance my thesis as it relates to the history of slavery within the novel *Beloved*. This is an excellent resource on background information for the writing of *Beloved*. In spite of the brief story by Kastor, it gives sufficient information as it relates to slavery within the novel.

Khaleghi, Mahboobeh. "Reclaiming Identity through the Community: A Study of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and a Mercy." *International Journal of English and Education* 1.2 (2012): 272-280. Print.

Khaleghi's article discusses the reclamation of identity within *Beloved*. Moreover, it explores the importance of the community as it relates to identity. Furthermore, the article expresses the importance of the women coming together to help deliver Sethe from the angry Beloved. I will utilize this article as a stepping stone for revealing the importance of the community as it relates to identities. Khaleghi's source is very instrumental in defining the name of Beloved and what it means to Sethe and her family. As I reflect on this article, I can relate to the purpose of identity through the community.

Krumholz, Linda. "The Ghosts of Slavery: Historical Recovery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *African American Review* 26.3 (1992): 395-408. Print.

Linda Krumholz discusses in her article the ghosts of slavery within the novel of *Beloved*. She also discusses how the protagonist Sethe deals with the history of her past which involves the ghost of her child named Beloved. Krumholz further discusses how Morrison constructs history through African American slaves. Krumholz's article will help supplement my thesis as I write about the Neo-Slave Narratives in *Beloved*. I can use this article to further implement the history of Slave Narratives as it relates to *Beloved*. As I reflect on Krumholz's article I can relate to African Americans and their historical past dealing with slavery and their identity.

Lyles-Scott, Cynthia. "A Slave by Any Other Name, Names and Identity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Beloved*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009. 195-202. Print.

Cynthia Lyles-Scott discusses the importance of identity within *Beloved*. Lyles-Scott further discusses the influence of naming in the novel. I will utilize this story as it relates to identity issues amongst the characters. I will further utilize Lyles-Scott's story as it relates to the power of naming within the novel. I believe this source is very useful for the information regarding naming and identity. These two aspects are critical to the writing of my thesis on Neo-Slave Narratives.

Malmgren, Carl D. "Mixed Genres and the Logic of Slavery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *Critique* 36.2 (1995): 96-106. Print.

Carl Malmgren examines the possible logic of slavery in *Beloved*. He further examines how *Beloved* is viewed as a historical novel and ghost story. I will use Malmgren's article to further push my thesis as it relates to the reasoning behind the logic of slavery for the characters within *Beloved*. Malmgren's article will also be useful in the logic of relationships within *Beloved* as it relates to the state of slavery. My reflection on Malmgren's article is that it opens a door to demonstrate the power of slavery within relationships.

M'Baye, Babacar. "Morrison Examines the Divisive Impact of Racial Oppression."

*Slavery In Toni Morrison's Beloved*. Ed. Dedria Bryfonski. Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2012. 117-124. Print.

M'Baye's article discusses the impact of racial oppression upon African Americans in the midst of slavery. His article also reveals the abuse of the black woman and the psychological and economic effects within the novel. M'Baye's article can be implemented for the discussion of the different forms of abuse lashed upon African

American women. It further reveals information concerning white supremacy and how it relates to African Americans. My reflection of this source is that I can greatly benefit from the rich information supplied by the author.

McLaren, Joseph. "Slavery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *Critical Insights Beloved*. Ed. Maureen N. Eke. New York: Grey House Publishing, 2015. 95-110. Print.

Joseph McLaren discusses the importance of *Beloved* written as a Neo-Slave Narrative. He also discusses how *Beloved* is viewed as a narration of personal relationships and the torn legacy of the Black family. McLaren's story will benefit the writing of my thesis for the simple reason that it highlights *Beloved* as a Neo-Slave Narrative work. McLaren's story further illustrates different forms of slavery that I can incorporate into my thesis. In my opinion, the story gives great information of the historical forms of slavery involved in Neo-Slave Narratives.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. New York: Vintage Int'l, 1987. Print.

*Beloved* written by Nobel Prize Laureate Toni Morrison discusses Sethe the protagonist who was born into slavery, but later escapes only to find herself still not free some years later. She has many hideous memories from the beautiful warm she grew up on called "Sweet Home". *Beloved* is one of the three key novels in my thesis expressing how Neo-Slave Narratives are being used in the novels by these prolific authors. Morrison discusses a powerful story between mother and daughter and the attempt of Sethe to set her daughter free from slavery by killing her daughter. Slaves were not allowed to own any type of property, and therefore did not own their children. Sethe is later haunted by the memory of her daughter through a ghost in her new home. This novel is a great tale of

slavery for women and their children. This novel is also a great depiction of how women suffered as slaves during the times of slavery.

Parrish, Timothy L. "Imagining Slavery: Toni Morrison and Charles Johnson." *Studies in American Fiction*. 25.1 (1997): 81-100. Print.

Parrish's article discusses the idea of imagining slavery regarding the slaves. The article also discusses Morrison's plan of invoking the ghost of *Beloved* to illuminate identity in the novel. It further discusses the barrier between slavery and freedom. Parrish's article can be utilized in my thesis to further discuss the barriers that African Americans had to face in slavery. My reflection of this article is that Parrish's article will be very beneficial for my thesis on Neo-Slave Narratives.

Munoz-Valdivieso, Sofia. "Neo-Slave Narratives in Contemporary Black British Fiction." *Ariel* 42 (2012): 43-59. Print.

Munoz-Valdivieso's article examines Neo-Slave Narratives within Black British Fiction. Her article also reveals different definitions for the term, Neo-Slave Narrative. Furthermore, the article delves down into Black British Fiction as it relates to narratives. This article can be utilized to examine the various definitions of Neo-Slave Narratives. As I reflect on this article, it further implements Neo-Slave Narratives throughout the land.

Perez, Richard. "The Debt of Memory: Reparations, Imagination, and History in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 42.1/2 (2014): 192-200. Print.

Richard Perez discusses the debt of memory as it revolves slavery within the novel *Beloved*. He also examines the repercussions of the memory from the characters who

were enslaved in *Beloved*. This article can possibly be used to add to my thesis regarding the novel *Beloved*'s character Sethe and the haunting memory of killing her daughter.

This haunting memory of murder can enslave your mind and hold you in the past. My reflection of this work is that Perez argues an important factor of one's mind as it relates to memory recall.

Proudfit, Charles L. "Celie's Search for Identity: A Psychoanalytic Developmental Reading of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008. 89-112. Print.

Proudfit's article examines Celie's search for identity in the midst of her servitude lifestyle. His article also examines how slaves do not have an identity because they are just a price tag on a contract. It further discusses how Celie is a slave to her step-father and husband in the beginning of the novel. However, at the end she is a totally different woman. She is a free woman with her own house and business. Proudfit's article will further add to my thesis regarding Celie finding her identity. As I reflect on Proudfit's article, I can envision Celie becoming her own woman and discovering who she is as a African American woman.

Rhodes, Lisa R. *Toni Morrison Great American Writer*. New York: Grolier Publishing, 2001. Print.

Lisa R. Rhodes describes some of the key works such as *Tar Baby*, *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved* of the great author Toni Morrison. She also explains within the book the various exploits that inspired Morrison to write her literary works. Rhodes further states how a black woman named Margaret Garner life's story was the inspiration for the plot of *Beloved*. This source will help to examine the purpose behind the writings of Morrison.

This source further reviews the novel *Beloved* and gives a summary of the story. Rhodes explains what Morrison hopes to gain from the written work of the novel. I believe this is an excellent source that summarizes some of Morrison's greatest work and also displays her influences for writing. Rhodes book gives a quick synopsis into Morrison's works and her life leading into her writing.

Ross, Daniel W. "Celie in the Looking Glass: The Desire for Selfhood in *The Color Purple*." *Modern Fiction Studies*. 34.1 (1988): 69-84. Print

Ross's article discusses the self-image of Celie. His article also discusses Celie looking in the mirror to discover her identity. Furthermore, it discusses the torn and fragmented bodies of women as they deal with the sexual abuse. Ross's source can further implement my thesis with a different perspective on selfhood for protagonist Celie. His source reflects deep research find your identity and then live with it.

Rushdy, Ashraf. "Daughter's Signifying History: The Example of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *Toni Morrison's Beloved*. Eds. William L. Andrews and Nellie Y. McKay. New York: Oxford UP, 1999. 37-66. Print.

Ashraf Rushdy discusses the significance of the daughter within Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Rushdy also discusses what influenced Morrison to write *Beloved*. I intend to use Rushdy's story to explain the significance of the mother and daughter relationship within *Beloved*. As I reflect on this story, it dives deep into the mother and daughter relationship inside of the novel. It further gives insight to the history of the purpose of Morrison writing *Beloved*.

Rushdy, Ashraf. *Neo-salve Narratives*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Print.

Rushdy's article discusses the different forms of Neo-Slave Narratives. It also delves deep into the specific definitions of the narratives. It further reveals the social logic of the narrative form. I will utilize this article to further implement the different forms and types of Neo-Slave Narratives. As I reflect on this article, it is a great source for the origin of the definition of the narrative.

Selzer, Linda. "Race and Domesticity in *The Color Purple*." *African American Review* 29.1 (1995): 67-82. Print.

Linda Selzer examines the critique of race within Walker's novel. Selzer also examines the class status of the character within the novel. Selzer's article will benefit in the writing of my thesis regarding the racial undertones of the novel. I will further utilize the article to discuss the kinship amongst the characters in the novel. My reflection of this article is that it shows a perspective of gender and race amongst the characters that helps unfold the Slave Narratives within the novel.

Singh, Sonal. "Celie's Emancipation in the novel *The Color Purple*." *International Transactions in Humanities and Social Sciences* 2.2 (2010): 218-221. Print.

Sonal Singh discusses Celie's journey to freedom in *The Color Purple*. He further discusses the survival for sisters Celie and Nettie through their disturbing living conditions. Singh's article shows how her sisterhood plays an important role into her awakening. I will use his article as a supplement to my writing concerning the slave narratives within *The Color Purple*. My reflection on this article is that it delves into the parental bondage of Celie and Nettie.

Smith, Barbara. "Sexual Oppression Unmasked." *Callaloo*. 22 (1984): 170-76. Print.

Smith's article examines the sexual oppression that African American women in slavery suffer from their white slave masters. The article examines how African American women have suffered from racism as well from their black men. It further examines how a black woman's love is the key to survival. Smith's article can be utilized to further gain knowledge concerning sexual oppression suffered by black women from their black men. As I reflect on Smith's article, it would be very beneficial on the issue of oppression and how to survive it.

Smith, Valerie. "Neo-Slave Narratives." *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Slave Narrative* Ed. Audrey Fisch. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. 168-188. Print.

Valerie Smith discusses Neo- Slave Narratives as it relates to African Americans in history. Smith further discusses the depiction of slavery and the suffrage of African Americans. I will utilize Smith's story to give my thesis a boost as it relates to Neo-Slave Narratives. I will further utilize Smith's story as a critical source to my thesis to help build my story on Neo-Slave Narratives. I believe Smith's story is a great critical source on the impact of Neo-Slave Narratives for African Americans.

Tahir, Ary Syamanad. "Gender Violence in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*." *Journal of Language & Literature*. 11 (2014): 1-19. Print.

Tahir's article examines sexual gender violence in *The Color Purple*. His article also examines physical and psychological violence as it relates to Celie in the novel. After dealing with the types of abuse, his article examines the emancipation of the women from *The Color Purple*. Tahir's article can further be used to define the different types of abuse

and how to overcome the harsh treatment. As I reflect on this article, it can be used to implement more awareness on gender violence.

Tucker, Lindsey. "Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*: Emergent Woman, Emergent Text." *Black American Literature Forum* 22.1 (1988): 81-95. Print.

Lindsey Tucker discusses the emergence and significance of the female within *The Color Purple*. Tucker also discusses the suspended woman, the assimilated woman and the emergent woman as it relates to *The Color Purple*. I will utilize Tucker's article to express the three types of women found within the novel. I will further utilize the concept of the formation of women within the novel as it relates to Slave Narratives. As I reflect on Tucker's article, I can envision the emergence of the woman in spite of the cruel treatment endured within the novel.

Vaught Brogan, Jacqueline. "The Hurston/Walker/Vaughn Conention: Feminist Strategies In American Fiction." *Womens Studies* 28 (1991): 185-200. Print.

Jacqueline Vaught Brogan's article examines the strategies of American fiction written by authors Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker and Elizabeth Vaughn. Vaught Brogan's article further examines how each author's writings influence one another to write. I will utilize Vaught Brogan's article to express what influences Hurston and Walker to write their literary fiction. My reflection of this article is that it fulfills historical literary background information on the authors.

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. Boston: Mariner Books, 1982. Print.

Alice Walker's novel discusses the trials and tribulations of two sisters, Celie and Nettie who grow up in poverty and experience slavery throughout their life as they try and

discover their true identities. They are separated as youth and write letters to one another for thirty years telling each other their life story, but the letters from Nettie to Celie are held up by the abusive husband of Celie named Mister. *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker is a key novel to sharing how the author uses Neo-Slave Narratives in her novel. Celie truly suffers at the hand of sexual, verbal, physical and mental abuse from her step-daddy as well as her husband. The horrific trials that Celie goes through are definite examples of what happened during the times of slavery. In my opinion, Walker writes an authentic story of women who suffer through Neo-Slave Narratives. In her writing, Walker is expressing what women actually went through during slavery. This is a great depiction of how women were treated during the times of slavery from their masters.

Waters-Dawson, Emma J. "Redemption Through Redemption of the Self in *Their Eyes*

*Were Watching God* and *The Color Purple*." *Alice Walker and Zora Neale*

*Hurston: The Common Bond*. Ed. Lillie P. Howard. Westport: Greenwood Press,

1993. 69-82. Print.

Waters-Dawson's article discusses redemption of their self in the novel. It further discusses the potential creativity found within Celie. More importantly, Celie attempts redemption through her creative artistry. Waters-Dawson's article will help illuminate the depiction of physical and psychological abuse within the novel. My reflection on this article leads me to a broader scope of the abuse that black women suffer from their black men.

Williams, Kam. "Alice Walker: *The Color Purple* 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary." *Journal of Pan*

*African Studies* 8.9 (2015): 156-160. Print.

Kam Williams interviews Alice Walker concerning the novel, film and play of *The Color*

*Purple*. Williams further discusses Walker's motivation for writing her novel *The Color Purple*. I will utilize Williams's interview as a tool to discover the purpose of Walker's novel. I will further utilize Williams's interview to implement the womanist and feminist aspect within *The Color Purple*. My reflection of this novel gives insight into the thinking of Walker as an author and a feminist.

Williams, Lisa. "The Character Beloved Depicts the Loss of Cultural Identity That Occurred During Slavery." *Slavery in Toni Morrison's Beloved*. Ed. Dedria Bryfonski. Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2012. 76-83. Print.

Williams's article examines how *Beloved* represents all the horrors that African Americans suffered aboard the slave ships. The article further examines how the ghost of *Beloved* symbolizes the displacement of Africans separated from their culture. More importantly, the article examines how the community has the power to release healing to its people. Williams's article can be utilized to support my thesis regarding healing in the community. As I reflect on Williams's, I can envision the power in the community to heal anything or anyone.

Zamalin, Alex. "Beloved Citizens: Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Racial Inequality, and American Public Policy." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 42.2 (2014): 207-13. Print.

Alex Zamalin explains his concept of racial inequality as it relates to Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. He also explains how social assistance causes African Americans to become indebted to the American society. Zamalin's article will help examine Morrison's reasons for sharing how American public policy influences the needed help for African Americans. I will also use Zamalin's article to provide necessary historical information

on African Americans pursuit to freedom. As I reflect on this article, I see how Racial Inequality and American Public Policy co-exist regarding the lives of African American and their pursuit for justice and freedom.

