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**The Black Maids' Voice : A case study in Kathryn
Stockett's "The Help"**

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*The Black Maids Voice :A case study in Kathryn
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Dedication

To my family and beloved friends

Acknowledgement

This thesis would not have been possible without the support and guidance of my supervisor Miss. Menouar Bedra , thank you for your help .

I am very grateful and thankful to my teachers from the university during my career from the first year to the master degree for their support.

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Abstract

The 1960s was a time of changing in America. But one problem seemed to remain in society Racism. Although the 1960s was the era of the changing, the racist segregation did not subside. Although segregation thrived through Jim Crow Laws, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X both fought hard against it. In the 1960s, the way of life was different for people with different colors of skin. It was based on white superiority and black inferiority. In fact many white novelists of the 19th and 20th century cared about the suffering of black people and focused on the issue of slavery and racism as : kathryn Stockett ,The newcomer to the literary genre of southern fiction in her novel "**THE HELP**" which deals with problems of segregation and race relations taking place in Mississippi in 1960s. The purpose of this thesis is to show the struggle of the blacks' women and their relations with the white masters. So the approach used in this thesis is Marxist Feminism.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	.I
Acknowledgments.....	.II
AbstractIII
Table of contents.....	.IV
General Introduction.....	1

Chapter one : slavery and racism in America

1. Introduction	5
2. What is slavery ?	5
1.2. a brief history of slavery.....	6
3. Definition of racism	8
3.1 Black Americans under racism	10
3.1.1 The ku Klux klun	11
3.1.2Jim crow laws	12
4. The African American civil right movement	13
5.conclusion	15

Chapter two : The status of Black American women in the novel « THE HELP »

1. introduction.....	18
2. <i>Definition of feminism.....</i>	18
2.1. <i>Black feminism.....</i>	19

3. Biography of the author Kathryn Stockett.....	20
3.1. An overview of the novel « The Help ».....	20
3.2. Description of main characters.....	22
3.2.1. Eugenia Phelan (Skeeter).....	22
3.2.2. Aibileen Clark.....	24
3.2.3. Minny Jackson.....	25
4. American black women in 1960s.....	26
5.conclusion.....	27
General Conclusion	29
Works Cited	31

General Introduction

Slavery had existed for thousands of years, but black slavery was particularly inhumane institution. it impacts families, traditional roles of mothers, and children.

Slavery was far worse for women than it ever was for men. Black women were discriminated during slavery and suffered a lot (they were subjected to mental and physical violation

The climax of the history of racism came in the twentieth century which was spread in America especially in the south. Black people were treated badly especially women who faced oppression during their lifetime.

This research work is mainly about the study of the public and personal lives of black women workers in the south of U.S and the history of the woman's role within the Civil Rights Movement. Black women were described as ignorant, poor, uneducated and victimized ,however the white ones were represented as educated, modern and had their freedom to make their own decisions. On the basis of these considerations ,the following research question can be raised :

- How was the relationship between the black maids and their white masters in the novel ‘‘**THE HELP**’’ ?and how they were treated ?

This research work is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter represents the period of slavery and racism that black Americans in general had faced dealing with

the origins of black that began with the Portuguese and followed other European power as : Spain, Britain and France and the segregating laws. Also it highlights the role of African American Civil Right Movement .

However the second chapter examines the role and the struggle of black maids working for white masters in 1963 in America, through the novel '**The Help**', focusing on Mississippi and the southern states of America. Also the aim of this work is to provide an overview of the development of black women.

So the purpose of this study is to highlight the crucial role of black women in the history of America and their experiences .

Chapter one : slavery and racism in America

1. Introduction

2. What is slavery ?

1.2. A brief history of slavery

3. Definition of racism

3.1 Black Americans under racism

3.1.1 The ku Klux klun

3.1.2 Jim crow laws

4. The African American Civil Right Movement

5. Conclusion

1.Introduction

Slavery was a tragic experience for African American people that last for many years. It was a destructive experience for African Americans especially women. Men suffered a lot at that period but women suffered doubly during the slave era.

Throughout history there have been different civil rights movements. The civil rights movement was a movement organized by black Americans to end racial discrimination and gain equal rights under the law.

2.What is slavery ?

The word *slave* in English language originates from the [Scottish](#) *sclave*, which comes from the Old French *esclave*, which in turn comes from the Medieval Welsh *sclavus*, which originates from the early [Greek](#) *sklabos* Slavs, of Slavic origin; akin to Old Russian Slovene, an East Slavic tribe. (The New World Encyclopedia).

Slavery refers to a condition in which individuals are owned by others, who control where they lived and at what they work.slavery had previously existed throughout history in many times and most places, the ancient greek and the romans all had slaves ([Richard Hellie](#),1999).

Slavery is a system that includes forced labor in which people are held against their will. Slaves don't have the freedom to make decisions about their work because they are bought and sold like property. Working conditions are generally very poor for slaves and, in many cases, they are physically abused if they do not follow their owners' directions. Slaves can be men, women, and even young children. Before the United States won the Revolutionary War and was officially recognized as an independent nation in 1783, Africans were forced to come to America to work as slaves.(Amy Lively,2005)

The definition of slavery has caused controversy since the beginning of the abolition process, yet is of paramount importance for the international community in

working towards its effective eradication. Definitions have caused controversy for two reasons: first, there are differences of opinion about which practices should be categorized as slavery and thus designated for elimination; second, definitions have often been accompanied by obligations on States to carry out particular remedial measures.

2.1. Brief history of slavery

Slavery has a lot of effects on African Americans today. History of slavery is marked for civil rights. With farming's development, war could be taken as slavery. Female slaves were as sexual services for white people also their masters at that time, having freedom only when their masters died. In South American countries, during the period from late 19th and early 20th centuries, requirement for making the labor to be more focused harvesting of rubber, expansion and slavery in Latin America and somewhere else. (Heather Andrea Williams, 2005).

Slavery has appeared for thousands of years from the old Roman emperor to nineteenth century. Regardless, it increased by the development of societies to make profit by cheap human labor. Slavery appeared in the United States in late of seventeen centuries as a result of the trade market. These slaves came from Africa to work in large plantations for free labor in America. Historians believe that the first ship of slaves to arrive in America was Dutch to the Virginia colony of Jamestown in 1619 with around 20 slaves. They were used slaves to work in the tobacco, sugar, rice, cotton, and coffee plantations. But slavery emerged the restriction of African's lives in North America. Though slaves in North America had their rights prohibited by their owners, they could have a small land for their own work, having family, religion practices (Wikipedia).

In the late of seventeen century most slaves worked on plantations ruled by their masters who had right to decide about Africans slave's lives. As a matter of fact, slaves become an object of work. They were obligated to work without any payment. Mainly these labors were divided by gender, region and age. In most plantations in

America, men slaves had to do all the hard work, children usually collect the crops, and women mostly did domestic task. For instance, in the New England women were much less likely to be used as field labor.

The story of the slaves in America begins with Christopher Columbus. His voyage to America was not financed by Queen Isabella, but by Luis de Santangelo, who advanced the sum of 17,000 ducats (about 5,000 pounds-today equal to 50,000 pounds) to finance the voyage, which began on August 3, 1492(Walter White Jr.,1968).

The first three centuries of the African American story is very much related to the evils and terrible sufferings of captivity and enslavement . Many millions of captured Africans were brought against their will to work without freedom or reward for the economic benefit of others in the Americas and the Caribbean (*David Olusoga ,2015*).

By the time of the civil war, there were nearly four million slaves in the United States, about 13% of the total US population. In the fifteen states in which slavery was legal, just over one in four white families were slave owners .This is a higher proportion than families who hired maids and servants in the non-slave states. In Mississippi the proportion of households that owned slaves was 49% (Henry Louis Gates Jr ,2014).

Slavery ended with the Civil War almost a century and a half ago, but of course its impact did not disappear simply because this form of racialized class relations had been destroyed. Slavery contributed to a particularly pernicious and durable form of racist beliefs that continues to influence American culture today. Slavery posed a deep cultural problem for the United States after the American Revolution.

3. Definition of racism

A careful examination of Fighting racism requires knowing what it is not an easy task. Today the word “racism” has so many contradictory meanings that it takes on the aura of a myth and is, therefore, difficult to define.

Because of a certain affinity, “racism” can be used as the correlate of a whole series of other terms: fascism, the extreme Right, anti-Semitism, sexism, etc. Used in the most diverse senses, the terms “racism” and “racist” become the formulas generating stereotypes (Alain de Benoist, 1999).

dictionaries since then reveals that the definitions of the term : **“A system which affirms the superiority of one racial group over the others”** (Larousse); **“A doctrine claiming the existence of biological differences between various races and the superiority of one of them”** (supplement to the Grand Littré); **“A theory of racial hierarchy which claims the necessity of preserving the so-called superior race from miscegenation and the right to dominate other races”** (Petit Robert). UNESCO’s 1978 “Declaration on Race” defines racism as **“any theory claiming the intrinsic superiority or inferiority of racial or ethnic groups which would give to some the right to dominate or even eliminate others, presumed inferior, or basing value judgments on racial differences”**.

Moreover, if racism has often accompanied and even encouraged colonialism, sometimes racist beliefs have also played the opposite role. As William B. Cohen states :

It has been suggested that racist theories developed in the second half of the 19th century were the basis of French imperialism. But, a number of those who believed in the inferiority of the black race were opposed to French colonial expansion in overseas territories

In genuine racialism, the racial factor is considered primordial and not just an element to be considered among an infinity of others. Moreover, true racialism maintains that there is a causal connection, often an almost mechanistic one, between the racial order and the socio-cultural domain in the sense that the former determines the latter. In addition, racialism does not imply racial inequality, and this is what

fundamentally distinguishes racialism from racism. At first glance, in its most rude form, racism seems to be the result of a fusion of racialism and a belief in racial inequality([Peter H. Schuck](#) ,2015).

here is surely no nation in the world that holds "racism" in greater horror than does the United States.

Dictionaries are not much help in understanding what is meant by the word. They usually define it as the belief that one's own ethnic stock is superior to others, or as the belief that culture and behavior are rooted in race. When Americans speak of racism they mean a great deal more than this. Though the dictionary definition of racism is a clue to understanding what Americans do mean. A peculiarly American meaning derives from the current dogma that all ethnic stocks are equal.

- **Individual Racism:** individual racism lies within individuals. These are private manifestations of racism that reside inside the individual. Examples include prejudice, xenophobia, and beliefs about race influenced by the dominant culture.
- **Institutional Racism:** institutional racism occurs within and between institutions. Institutional racism is discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and inequitable opportunities and impacts, based on race, produced and perpetuated by institutions (schools, mass media, etc.).
- **Structural Racism:** it is a system of hierarchy and inequity, primarily characterized by white supremacy – the preferential treatment, privilege and power for white people at the expense of Black, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, Arab and other racially oppressed people.

3.1. Black Americans under racism

To study race in American society, then, is to investigate the ways in which racial classifications are linked to historically variable forms of oppression. The moral core of such an analysis is understanding the ways in which racial oppression imposes harms on people in the racially oppressed category.

Race and racial inequality have powerfully shaped American history from its beginnings. Yet, from the start, American society was equally founded on brutal forms of domination, inequality and oppression which involved the absolute denial of freedom for slaves.

To many white observers racial discrimination and other racial oppression no longer seem important because they are no longer matters of official discrimination and legal segregation. Racism is often asserted by whites to be gone or sharply declining in this "post-racial society" because there are at least a few African Americans or other people of color in numerous professional or managerial positions in historically white organizations. Yet, one can recognize social changes in whites' racial domination in the United States without downplaying the still-strong relationship between being a black person or other person of color and being a target of serious racial discrimination . In one way or another, virtually all Americans of color continue to suffer significant discrimination today because white racial framing and domination of Americans of color remain major organizing features of our group life. The enduring racial hierarchy is still well supported by this racial framing, and it is perpetuated most centrally by the racial discrimination still carried out by a great many whites on a recurring basis in most areas of this society (Joe R. Feagin ,2014).

For more than a century after the Civil War, a system of laws and practices denied full freedom and citizenship to African Americans, segregating nearly all aspects of public life.

3.1.1.The Ku Klux Klan

At the end of the American Civil War, slavery was abolished (the Emancipation Proclamation by Abraham Lincoln in 1862). Legally the former slaves were free and equal to white people, but the reality was far different.

Members of the Ku Klux Klan dressed in white robes to stress their belief that whites were superior to blacks. As a result many black people did not register to vote and kept away from white areas. They (kkk) created a wave of terror which included threats of violence, bullying, lynching, setting fire to buildings and murder, among blacks and those who tried to help them.

The Ku Klux Klan was founded in 1866 and had extended into almost every southern state by 1870. Its members waged an underground campaign of intimidation and violence directed at white and black Republican leaders. Though Congress passed legislation designed to curb Klan terrorism, the organization saw its primary goal—the reestablishment of white supremacy—fulfilled through Democratic victories in state legislatures across the South in the 1870s. After a period of decline, white Protestant nativist groups revived the Klan in the early 20th century, burning crosses and staging rallies, parades and marches denouncing immigrants, Catholics, Jews, blacks and organized labor (Klára Kováčová, 2009).

The re-emergence of the Ku Klux Klan around 1915, coupled with the choke hold Jim Crow laws had on African-Americans in the South, raised tensions between blacks and whites in the United States. A wave of violent racial confrontations began to emerge in the 1920s, beginning one of the most socially turbulent times in America's history. (Julian Bond, 2011).

The civil rights movement of the 1960s also saw a surge of Ku Klux Klan activity, including bombings of black schools and churches and violence against black and white activists in the South (Julian Bond, 2011).

Black Americans had to face the truth. The war was won, but the battle was not over. They would have to struggle against racial discrimination in order to gain fair and equal treatment.

3.1.2 Jim Crows laws

Jim Crow was the name of the racial segregation system, which operated mostly in southern and border states, between 1877 and the mid-1960s. Jim Crow was more than a series of strict anti-black laws. It was a way of life. Under Jim Crow, African Americans were given the status of second-class citizens.

The social system of Jim Crow began in the 1880's and ended in the 1960's. The legal and informal Jim Crow practices meant racial subordination and an imposed badge of degradation on all African Americans in many areas of the United States (Smythe 1948; Feagin 2006).

The following Jim Crow etiquette norms show how horrifying and terrible these norms were : www.ferris.edu/jimcrow

1. A black male could not offer his hand (to shake hands) with a white male because it implied being socially equal. Obviously, a black male could not offer his hand or any other part of his body to a white woman because it was not acceptable for him to touch a white women.
2. Blacks and whites were not supposed to eat together. If they did eat together, whites were to be served first, and some sort of partition was to be placed between them.
3. Under no circumstance was a black male to offer to light the cigarette of a white female--that gesture implied intimacy.
4. Blacks were not allowed to show public affection toward one another in public, especially kissing, because it offended whites.
5. Jim Crow etiquette required that blacks were introduced to whites, never whites to blacks. For example: "Mr. Peters (the white person), this is Charlie (the black person), that I spoke to you about."

6. Whites did not use courtesy titles of respect when referring to blacks, for example, Mr., Mrs., Miss., Sir, or Ma'am. Instead, blacks were called by their first names. Blacks had to use courtesy titles when referring to whites, and were not allowed to call them by their first names.
7. If a black person rode in a car driven by a white person, the black person sat in the back seat or the back of a truck.
8. White motorists had the right-of-way at all intersections.

4.The African American Civil Right Movement

Throughout history there have been different civil rights movements. Each movement fought for the rights of a given section of the people that was being discriminated against. For example, **the African American Civil Right Movement**

The civil rights movement was a movement organized by black Americans to end racial discrimination and gain equal rights under the law. It began in the late 1940s and ended in the late 1960s. the movement was mostly nonviolent and was organised to protect every American's constitutional rights, regardless of color, race, sex or national origin. Also the civil rights movement was largest social movement of the 20th century in the United States. It influenced the modern women's rights movement of the 1960s .

The civil rights movement centered on the American South. That was where the African American population was concentrated and where racial inequality in education, economic opportunity, and the political and legal processes was most flagrant. (Davis, Jack E.,2014).

When most Americans think of the Civil Rights Movement, they have in mind a span of time beginning with the 1954 Supreme Court's decision in [Brown v. Board of Education](#), which outlawed segregated education, or the Montgomery Bus Boycott (Rosa Parks refusal to give up her bus seat to a white man in 1955 sparked

intense protests by blacks and concerned whites) culminated in the late 1960s or early 1970s.

A primary target of supremacist groups was the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).the strategy of (NAACP) was to attack Jim Crow Laws by finding samples in which the civil right of an african american had been violated and to end segregation in public places (Davarian L. Baldwin,2011).

In 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. helped to organize the famous "March on Washington". Over 250,000 people attended this march in an effort to show the importance of civil rights legislation , It was at this march where Martin gave his speech "I Have a Dream" to continue to struggle for equal rights .**Martin Luther King Jr** called for the end of racism in the US as well as civil and economic rights.

In 1964, Congress passed the **Civil Rights Act of 1964**, which officially prohibited discrimination based on race as well as sex , and on August 6, 1965, another law was passed called **the Voting Rights Act**. This law said that citizens could not be denied the right to vote based on their race.

5.conclusion

Slavery and racism had existed for thousands of year in America, but black slavery was particularly horrific and inhumane institution. African Americans frequently experience many dangerous problems. They were susceptible to racial discrimination and treated badly especially women who faced oppression during their lifetime but they were always present to fight for their right and impose themselves in the American society.

Chapter two : The status of Black American women in the novel « THE HELP »

1. Introduction

2. Definition of feminism

2.1. Black feminism

3. Biography of the author Kathryn Stockett

3.1. An overview of the novel « The Help »

3.2. Description of main characters

3.2.1. Eugenia Phelan (Skeeter)

3.2.2. Aibileen Clark

3.2.3. Minny Jackson

4. American black women in 1960s

5.conclusion

1.Introduction

During the early 1960s, times were agitated in the Mississippi. Society was strictly segregated along racial issues, and the social, political, and economic rights of black Americans were repressed through violence and other forms of menace.

The Mississippi occupies a specific and dramatic place in the history of America's civil rights movement. No state in the South was more resistant to the struggle for black equality. David Oshinsky writes: "The codes of honor and vengeance, the effects of poverty, ignorance, and isolation had all left their bloody mark. Mississippians earned less, killed more, and died younger than other Americans..."

In this chapter we are going to talk about black women in american society especially the ones who work as maid for the white families in 1960s in southern US , and their right during this period of time through the novel **The Help** .

2. Definition of feminism

The term ‘ **Feminism** ‘ has a long history; it represents women’s problems and suffering in addition to their dreams in equal opportunities in societies controlled by man.

The concept ‘**Feminism**’ appeared in France in the late of 1880s by Hunburtine Auclert in her Journal La Citoyenne as **La Féminité** where she tried to criticize male domination and to claim for women’s rights in addition to the emancipation promised by the French revolution. By the first decade of the 20th century, the term appeared in English first in Britain and then in 1910s in America and by 1920s in the Arab World as Niswia. Feminism originates from the Latin word femina that describes womens issues (Wikipedia).

Feminism is a Theoretical or socio-political movement addressing the systematic inequal treatment of women vis-à- vis men. The movement originated in the 18th century and was first predominantly concerned with women’s political rights,

such as voting etc. While feminism is about achieving equal rights for both men and women, we still need to remember that women face more inequalities than men. For many years women have been seen as being less than or weaker than men (Elke Weik,2015).

In Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics, bell hooks (2000) shares her simple definition of feminism: “Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” (p 8).

2.1.Black feminism

African American women began to express their situation as women in the 19th century. In the early 1800s , most black were enslaved , but free black women participated in the abolitionist cause like ; maria stewart and sojourner truth who spoke about black women’s rights and how gender oppression has unique consequence for black women living a racist , economically system (Erzulie Danto,2014).

The term « black feminism » was not extensively used until the beginning of the black women movement in the 1970s .

The black woman was separated from participating in any social , economical , or political activities done by feminists organizations which were controlled at that time by white women and was classified as the lower class of women, that why black women started to fight against this unfair classification and create their own organization called “womansim “, a term coined by Alice Walker's **In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose (1983)** . Walker has examined the whole history of the African Americans, from the troubled period of slavery and the long struggle for civil rights to the victories scored in overcoming negative stereotypes and restrictions imposed by the white community. she highlights the black woman's agency, strength, capability, and independence. Opposed to the gender separatism that bedevils feminism, womanism presents an alternative for black women by framing their survival in the context of the survival of their community

where the fate of women and that of men are inextricably linked ([Linda Napikoski](#),2018).

Collins's theory has seven core themes that are represented such as: the work, life and oppression of black women, controlling images of black women, the power of self definition, the sexual politics of black womanhood, black women's love and relationships, black motherhood, and rethinking black women's activism.

3. Biography of the Author Kathryn Stockett

Kathryn Stockett is an American novelist. She is known for her 2009 [debut novel](#), [The Help](#), which is about [African-American maids](#) working in white households in [Jackson, Mississippi](#), during the 1960s. The inspiration for the novel is Stockett's own childhood.

Kathryn Stockett is a writer and editor of American origin. Born in 1969 in Jackson, Mississippi .Stockett studied creative writing and English for her undergraduate course from University of Alabama. Then she moved to New York in order to pursue work in publishing business. For about nine years she offered her services in marketing and publishing of magazine there .Then she moved to Atlanta, Georgia, where she lives with her daughter and shifted her interest to literary writing as she moved back to South . After five years of hard work on her personal writing project she finally had *The Help* published in 2009. She divorced from her husband in 2011.

3.1. An overview of the novel « The Help »

There have been considerable debates concerning *The Help* since the phenomenal success of both Kathryn Stockett's book and the movie adaptation.

The Help is a 2009 novel by American novelist Kathryn Stockett, she therefore grew up in a similar situation to that of the characters in the novel, especially with that

of Skeeter Phelan. In 2011 the book also became a successful and popular movie. **The Help** was published in 42 languages. It is a story of racism, segregation, and feminism set between 1962 and 1964 in Jackson, Mississippi. It focuses on the lives of black maids working in white households during the earliest moments of the civil rights movement. It's through the voices of these three main characters (narrators) ; the white journalist Miss Skeeter and the two black maids Aibileen and Minny that the story of **The Help** is told. Together, Skeeter and the black maids work together to write down many colored maids' stories about their experiences working for the white families of Jackson which means a collection of true stories about how the "help" in Jackson actually lives and their relations between them (The colored people are described as the other, whereas the whites are seen as the high norm).

The Help is a work of fiction, yet it is realistically linked to a number of social and political issues, it has become one of the most popular modern novels dealing with the experiences of black Americans in the south and to examine the issue of race and friendship between the characters of the novel .

It is through the firm relationship between these three main characters Minny , Skeeter and Aibileen that each women can find her courage and strength even in time of injustice and struggle .

Kathryn Stockett said about her novel **The Help** "I was scared, a lot of the time, that I was crossing a terrible line, writing in the voice of a black person. I was afraid I would fail to describe a relationship that was so intensely influential in my life, so loving, so grossly stereotyped in American history and literature" (Stockett ,450) . She said also "what I am sure about is this: I don't presume to think that I know what it really felt like to be a black woman in Mississippi, especially in the 1960s" (ibid).

The novel shows differences between the black and white.As Chris Weedon in **Identity and Culture :Narratives of Difference and Belonging**. He says :

that whiteness, is assumed to be natural and the norm. This practice of assuming the universality of whiteness as a marker of quintessentially human has deep roots in the development of Western culture since the Renaissance. One of its outcomes has been white supremacy: the belief in the natural superiority of white people. (p.15)

3.2. Description of main characters

Characters in the novel are well aware of “rules” governing black and white interactions and the “lines” that divide the races in the South of the 1960s.

The three main characters of *The Help* are : Eugenia phelan (skeeter) ,Aibileen Clark and Minny Jackson.

3.2.1.Eugenia “Skeeter” Phelan

"'I'd like to write this showing the point of view of the help. The colored women down here.' I tried to picture Constantine's face, Aibileen's. 'They raise a white child and then twenty years later the child becomes the employer. It's that irony, that we love them and they love us, yet...' I swallowed, my voice trembling. 'We don't even allow them to use the toilet in the house.'" (**stockett , p125**)

This quote is related to skeeter who wanted to use her social privilege to give voice to the black women she knows and gives her the power to write her book about the maids.

Skeeter is described as an innocent and a good person. Skeeter cannot stand hypocrisy and lies, and ask difficult and uncomfortable questions
Eugenia “Skeeter” Phelan is a young white woman in her early twenties from a rich family who was born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi . She is the only daughter of

Carlton and Charlotte Phelan and has an older brother named Carlton jr. Her family employs lots of African-American workers. She graduated from the University of Mississippi. She wants to become a writer, but her mother would rather that her daughter get married .She is friends with two of the most popular women in town, Hilly Holbrook and Elizabeth Leefolt, and is also one of the few white girls in town who is not married.

Their former family maid, Constantine, whom Skeeter had always loved ,respected and raised her as a child disappeared mysteriously when Skeeter was in college. Skeeter is curious about the disappearance of the maid but her mother says that constantine quit from her job. While trying to unravel her friend's disappearance, Skeeter starts to realize that the black maids in Jackson are treated rather poorly, and decides that she wants to reveal the truth in her first book with the aid of the black maids including Aibileen and Minny who are undecided to speak to her, because a black woman speaking out in the South in the early 1960s could be very dangerous and risky.

Skeeter Phelan is an intelligent, ambitious, serious, honest, and brave woman , as she is the only white woman to consider doing something to help the colored situation. Skeeter decides to show the world the maids' perspective on their working situation and confronts her best friend Hilly Holbrook and the white society. Also Skeeter breaks the barrier existing between men and women in the workforce. Skeeter becomes a best-selling author and is offered a job at Harper & Row which was something new in 1960s as women were not supposed to have a career but rather to get married and raise a family.

3.2.2.Aibileen Clark

“I use my colored bathroom from now on. And then I go on and Clorox the white bathroom again real good.” (stockett ,14)

This quote is related to Aibileen and she means that it is acceptable for a black woman to clean up after a white family or to care for their children, but it is unacceptable for her to use the same facilities as them.

Furthermore, Aibileen compares herself with a cockroach:

“That night after supper, me and that cockroach stare at each other down across the kitchen floor. He big, inch, inch an a half. He black. Blacker than me”. (p.189)

This means that not only white people have a bad attitude towards black people but also Aibileen looks down on her self.

Aibileen Clark is a black woman in her early fifties, born in 1909. She has two sisters, Inez and Mable, and was married to a man named Clyde, who left her and their son Treelore who died at the age 24. His death has deeply affected Aibileen.

Aibileen is an intelligent, gentle and loyal woman who worked as a maid for the white families of Jackson, Mississippi. She specializes in taking care of their children. She teaches the children she raises that the color of skin does not matter but love and kindness do. She works for the Leefolt family and taking care of their infant Mae Mobley. Aibileen loves Mae Mobley and she used to tell her "You is kind. You is smart. You is important" .

She is a best friend of Minny Jackson (a black maid), they both look out for one another and are always there to help each other. Aibileen understands the injustice that has been a part of her life and is inflicted upon colored people. Also, she knows what her role in society is , she tells : “I ended up saying *alright* like I always do” (p93). This shows how restricted every maids liberty is ; that they can't speak up for the risk of being fired .

At the beginning Aibileen is afraid to stand up and to tell her story in public (the writing project with Skeeter) about the racial mistreatment she has endured during her life in the south US , but Minny and Skeeter convinced her .

At the end Aibileen discovers that she has to leave her work as a maid and to look for her independence and a work that she deserves.

3.2.3. Minny Jackson

Minny, is another black maid in her mid-thirties and Aibileen's best friend. She has five children and her husband Leroy is an alcoholic who often beats her. She is known for her delicious cooking but also unable to keep employment because of her sharp tongue, so has been fired several times and has trouble finding work, especially after she insults and humiliates the most popular white woman in town, Hilly Holbrook with the famous « chocolate pie ».

Minny finds a job and work for Miss Celia, who is Hilly Holbrook's enemy and they develop a deep, loving friendship that transcends the racial divide.

In the novel 'The Help' Minny is described as: "She is too much – too much woman to be a lady, too much mouth for a maid, too black for her own good" (p100). Minny Jackson is a loyal friend, a tough, independent woman, and courageous enough. She often speaks out against injustice and contributes to the book written by Skeeter about black maids.

"I like telling my stories. It feels like I'm doing something about it. When I leave, the concrete in my chest has loosened, melted down so I can breathe for a few days" (p 256). This quote is related to Minny which explains her feelings about the stories she tells Skeeter and shows the courage she has built through her time working with Skeeter and Aibileen.

4. American black women in 1960s

Black women are included in the social history of the U.S. including that of the Civil Rights Movement and other important social changes. During that period which lasted from the 1960s to the 1980s, American women fought for equal rights to those of men in different aspects of life such as education, politics, and the workforce.

Moreover, black women were also overcoming racism and sexism they were enforced to.

For black women who labored as domestic workers in the 1960s, the racially segregated South became an integral device for altruism, and created innovative meanings for activism. (Collins, 2009; Crawford, Rouse and Woods, 1993).

In 1960s American white women have to get married and raise a family. It was a decade in which there was the highest number of marriages. However, white women in the southern states of America, Mississippi, generally employed black maid. Black women were often cooks, housekeepers or a nursemaids, but they could also be teachers or nurses in schools and hospitals for blacks.

Black women who worked as maids during the 1950s and 1960s were generally treated as poor, uneducated, child-like creatures (Thompson, 1988).

The knowledge that we have about black women during Slavery shows two main descriptions: a sexual object for the master's pleasure or a 'mammy' figure(a black maid as in '**The Help**') who is "characterized as a loyal domestic servant to White people...that loves, takes care of, and provides for her white family over her own" (Woodard & Mastin, 2005).

5. Conclusion

In 1960s , black women were in a difficult position between the civil rights and feminist movements. women were almost forced to express themselves as sexually neutral, and dedicated domestic servant. They were depicted as 'maids,' loyal to their White masters or employers and placed the care of that family over their own

Black women were trying to protect their families. Also they were giving love and affection to the families that they worked for as in the novel **The Help**, but they were always present to fight for their right and impose themselves in the American community .

General Conclusion

The U.S is a country based on justice and equality but it failed to apply it on African Americans.

After the long history of slavery in the British colonies in North America, and the existence of [slavery in America](#) until 1865, the amendment was the first evident mention of the institution of slavery in the U.S. [Constitution](#).

Many African-Americans suffer from racism and oppression in American society till now. The 13th Amendment(the Emancipation Proclamation by Abraham Lincoln) which abolished slavery in the United States, became part of the Constitution in 1865.

Since 1960s black americans have made a good progress (the civil right movement) but it was not enough. By the end of the 19th century ,the reconstruction ended and the rights of black people were violated again by the white. Yet the african americans suffered from these segregation laws.

the abolition of slavery and the feminist movement led the african american women to be a crucial part in the American society after the civil war. Women had to work alongside with men, and impose their role in the American community .

Black women slaves faced different problems and often had uncomfortable relations with their white owners ; from the white women's dissatisfaction, to the sexual threats and rape by owners .

The goals of slavery were about the utilization of the productive capacities of everyone including the woman. The black slave woman was appointed to just taking

care of home of the white and could not work in other domains especially in the south in 1960s as we see it before through the analysis of the novel '**THE HELP**' in chapter two .

Black women developed ways to fight for the evolvment of her position in the society. They played a great role in the black race revolution. They struggle sorely against racism and were engaged in different social and political activism .

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