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***The Contribution of Contemporary African  
American Literature in American Society***

A Dissertation submitted in Partial Fulfillment to the department of English for the Requirements of Master Degree in English civilization and Literature.

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# Dedication

Every challenging work needs hard efforts as well as guidance of  
elders especially those who were very close to our heart.

I dedicate my humble efforts to my sweet and loving

Father & Mother

Whose encouragement and prays of day and night make me able to get

such success and honor

To all those whom I know

To all respected teachers

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## **Abstract**

African American people among the other societies suffered severely from earlier time because of their terrifying past that affected them negatively. Actually their suffering resulted from their historical background since slavery, racism and exploitation that destroyed the Black society. In this context, those experiences inspired African American authors to write on those experiences. As a result, they succeeded in creating a distinct literature which has become accepted as an integral part of American literature .Whereas other views denied this literature as one of inferiority which should disappear. Hence, African American writers have struggle to defend their cultural and literary heritage by highlighting positively the African American's reality, portraying different themes. However, the black literature has confronted a bitter disappointment by new critiques that discussed again its location in American literature. This work is an attempt to describe the African American literature in American Society and its recent developments in which it relies on commentaries on number of related texts .

**Keywords:** African Americans, the black literature, racism, slavery, exploitation , oppression identity.

## ملخص

إن المجتمع الأفروأمريكي عانى كثيرا منذ زمن طويل بسبب تجربتين التمييز والعبودية . بدأت هذه المعاناة عندما حرما من حقوقهم الاجتماعية ، الاقتصادية ، السياسية والثقافية وذلك لأن المجتمع الأفروأمريكي عانى كثيرا بسبب تلك النظرة التمييزية والاستغلالية التي أدت إلى تدميرهم نفسيا و جسديا ،حيث أصبحت الحياة لا تطاق في مجتمع يسوده التمييز العنصري وخصوصا عندما يتقاسمون الحياة مع المجتمع الأمريكي . هاتين التجربتين جعلت الكتاب الأفروأمريكيون يجسدون ما عاشوا من معاناة واستغلال في كتاباتهم في العصر الحديث بحيث أصبحوا يناقشون موضوعات حديثة مثل التمييز العنصري، العبودية، التهميش، الوطنية، الهوية والجنس في أعمالهم الأدبية فقط لكي يبرهنوا للعالم أنهم عاشوا تجربة مريرة منذ نشأة تاريخهم أو - بسبب تاريخهم - ولكن و صفهم لهذه التجربة و تبني مواضيع جديدة أخرى أدت حقيقة إلى ظهور الآداب الأفروأمريكية التي ازدهرت في العصر الحديث. غير أن البعض يرى أن هاته التجارب غير موجودة أصلا أو أنها مبرمجة خصوصا تلك التي ربطت بتاريخهم مثل العبودية أو التمييز العنصري من قبل ومن هنا ، لا يمكن القول بأن هاته الآداب لا يمكن ان تكون موجودة أصلا و إن وجدت فقد تجعلنا نتساءل عن مكانتها ضمن الآداب الأمريكية . تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقديم وصف كامل لهذه الآداب من خلال وصف أعمال الكتاب الأفروأمريكيين وطريقة كتاباتهم في أزمنة مختلفة في العصر المعاصر. ولكن بالرغم من أن الكتابات الأفروأمريكية نقدت للمجتمع كثيرا إلا أنها كانت موضوع نقاش كبير من حيث انها تداولت المواضيع التاريخية للمجتمع الأفروأمريكي ولكن في نفس الوقت استطاعت في العصر الحديث إلى بلوغ ذروتها في سرد الواقع المعيشي للمجتمع الأفروأمريكي و معاناته منذ مدة طويلة. بفضل تلك المواضيع و التجارب استطاع الكاتب الأفروأمريكيون إلى أن يطورو كتاباتهم في العصر الحديث لكي تصبح جزءا مهما من الأدب الأمريكي بحيث لا يمكن فصلها عنه.

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# **General Introduction**

## General introduction

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This research paper introduces African American literature in American Society during the contemporary age .Actually this writing emerged because of the historical influential experiences of the African Americans when their suffering started from their terrifying past from century because of racism and slavery. The black writers influenced strictly by their history and they started to reflect that experience on their works and by portraying them frequently in the contemporary age. In another words, that exploitation appeared from a long time thus make the black writers inspired to reflect those experiences in their works which are embodied on the contributions of African American authors.

Of course I Choose this topic for two main reasons, first, I personally like it second because that African American society has a great history that is reflected on this literature.

Those experiences inspired some African American authors to write strictly to describe the African American's resistance .In many ways, the struggle for freedom racism and slavery and other contemporary themes are the main topics that are discussed deliberately in African American literature on American Society .

However, some African American contributions are rejected and overlooked during the contemporary age especially novels, as it deals with slavery and racial segregation's themes, in which it is regarded valueless as inferior, this view has been already discussed frequently in the present day.

Indeed, African Americans were viewed as people who have no tradition, no cultural heritage and no history , in other terms, If we consider that of the history of slavery and racism that led to emergence of the African American literature that started with the historical records of the experiences of the blacks and their suffering against those experiences if those experiences are denied ,so to what extent does the black literature succeed to portray the black's reality ? the hypothesis of the last facts actually are reviewed again and denied by some historians, and they insisted that it is institutionalized and

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programmative experiences, thus lead us view that this literature doesn't exist, in this case , what is the place of the black literature among the American and the other literature ?

This study aims to provide readers a general background about the African American literature by exploring it in the contemporary age through describing the African American heritage by describing the way of literary writing of the blacks , in addition to exploring African American's literary experiences through and how it collectively had been developed through four historical periods, as a result to reach another purpose which about opening the dialogue between the Whites and the Blacks.

Since we deal with this thesis we obviously depend on several sources, at the beginning of this research (Lynch , 2019) provides us a general overview about the history of African Africans, starting by defining this ethnic group portraying the slavery and racism experience as they are the most significant periods that build in the history of America .here, we need to indicate how the African American faced a lot of suffering inside the white society. Even here, we explore the series of the Afro-Americans's resistance toward freedom until they realize their liberation by the ant-slavery movement.

In the other part, ( Brown, 2013) here ,we describe the African American society culturally socially , their clothing , lifestyle and the effect of oral traditions on their culture that passed from one generation to another giving its significance in African American tradition, religion is another personal freedom that emphasizes the African identity equality and hope are the best mainstream of African American life.

According to (Hine ,et al. 2004) we try to highlight both educational and healthy sides, giving the healthy problems of this community, with the major diseases that affect them because of the bad conditions of their lives especially in the south, concerning education, this reference improves the negative effects of racial discrimination and the slavery on the African

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American's community Exploring the contributions of African Americans leaders on developing the African American 'children's education.

Moreover, to get a general idea about African American literary works and that are belong to the contemporary era slavery , that discus the topics of racism and oppression of the African American society by giving some contemporary examples that are concerned with this literature of book that refer to ( Killam & Rowe, 2000).

Hence, since we to deal with the African American literature especially novels we refer on (Quentin ,2016) we need to explore the African American works that treat the former subjects giving some selected writing during the contemporary age. Then, moving to discuss the different periods that follow those works in details starting first by the Harlem Renaissance era, to the civil rights or the black era movement then, the reconstruction era and finally the black feminist movement using the next references

The first part is concerned with getting a general idea about the most interested period in African American literature “the Harlem renaissance”, and its evolution in African American contributions in1920 and literally effects. Taking some African Americans’s works that relayed to this period from the thesis of ( Ziane , 2016).

We refer on another dissertation of (Miniotaité ,2017) We describe the social ,political, cultural conditions in 1960s ,that coincided with the era the civil rights and the black era movements, revealing the black culture and rejecting the white integration ,rising consciousness and nationalism are the most important topics that are dealt by the African Americans authors.

Furthermore ,we give more details about the African American works during the reconstruction era or the period of consciousness and self-decision by African Americans here we give some example briefly on referring to (O'Neil, 2017) work in which he describes the African American writing during this period adopting some written examples.

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Besides, we try to explain the black woman movement and her struggle against sexism and racism the black feminist writing towards the gender oppression and the male-centered account are the most literary achievements during this era against all kinds of exploitation we embody this movement by some African Americans writers from another article with unknown author (“But Some of Us Brave: a History of The Black Feminism in The United States”).

Concerning the critical part from our dissertation in which we deal with the literary side of the African American writing in general, giving a multiple points of views by a category of some critics' perspectives, we refer to the book of (Tyson , 2006), and the dissertations of ( Rudds , 2016) and (Dieng ,2009) in which each one of them improves his view by his arguments.

It is reasonable to follow the descriptive method in purpose of highlighting and clarifying the contemporary novels of some African American writers by adopting the last data, at the same time exploring the reality of the African American society 'experiences through three main chapters. In which the first part provide readers with a general background about the African Americans community and the main historical facts which are needed to fully understand the black literature such as the slave trade as it is a main period in the history of the blacks , The second chapter introduces the African American literature during the contemporary age by presenting the different eras such as the Harlem renaissance , civil rights movement , the period of reconstruction and the black women movement and discussing the main themes as racism and slavery, whereas the last one focuses the literary critical side of African American writing in American Society from different perspectives.

**Chapter One**  
**Historical Background on African**  
**Americans**

### **Introduction**

African Americans build their culture from their history, in fact that their history recorded their experiences frequently because of their series towards liberation from a long time. Racism spread around the American history especially in the south. African Americans are marginalized because of their skin color by the white society.

The story of the African Americans began in the period of the slave trade when they suffered because of some racial discrimination, segregation and exploitation. Of course, this suffering caused several negative effects physically and morally in the African American society.

### **I-The Historical Background of African Americans:**

African American according to ( Lynch, 2019 ) are people came from different ethnic groups in United States, they have African origins that they are their ancestors. African Americans actually were slaves or people who are forced to come to new world to discover it , of course, those people used to have a limited rights and they are extremely deprived from their political, social and economic rights although they built a great historical and cultural contributions to the American nation . During the twenty-first century a great number of African Americans settled in the southern states in New York cities and Chicago in addition to others who preferred to live in the largest cities.

African Americans used frequently to struggle for equality and identity, they went to the north in order to gain jobs there, and they started to migrate until they spread largely within the American population. Earlier, black helped Spanish and Portuguese to spread in the United States, they settled in Mississippi valley and South Carolina and New Mexico.

The history of the black began in 1619 in America when some Africans were owned lands in the colony of Virginia .then, the English colonies bought some Africans to exploit them as a consequence they combined a great population in the United States' societies.

Indeed, the black strictly suffered from slavery because of their skin color among the other population, in other words, African American's suffering began from the period of slave trade especially the slaves who belongs to the west of Africa. Others were exploited and sold by the European traders in slave ships in the horrible Middle Passage across the Atlantic ocean to the West Indies as a result the death , deceases and suicide (ibid).

Actually, the black slaves are the real cause of the economic power of the Unites States; they are responsible for the contributions of the southern speech when they brought with them many traditions such as folklore, music, dancing and food. Meanwhile, African Americans who were born in the United States were exploited physically in plantations of

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vice, sugar, indigo and cotton. Here, they succeeded largely in the economical investment in the south.

Back to the north, later on slavery spread more than it was in the south because of the contributions of the great numbers of slaves in taxation in representative in Congress but in 1807 the president Thomas Jefferson started to make a definite end for African Americans' slave trade as it was the first step to abolish slavery, but unfortunately it didn't complete till it became a domestic slave trade in the united states. However, this later trade had a positive advantage for the labors that started to invest in the south.

During this period slave codes spread because of the big exploitation of the slaves from the white society, they were totally forbidden from their rights, they were deprived from reading and writing. Some of them rebelled on their masters until they became victims of the physical punishment with brutal ways .all this reasons made the African American slaves insist for resistance and struggle to gain their freedom.

In the other hand, the number of African American arose in the north and south but they still suffered from discrimination. For example those who lived in the north were deprived from right to vote, property and freedom although they were educated. All this events made African American' s leaders to corporate in order to find solution to racism and segregation by establishing their own institutions, churches, schools and their own organizations. To some extent, they succeeded to gain their liberation by abolishing slavery first, as a result they established their own journal in 1847 the North Star by the former slave Frederick Douglass who used to argue that the black should swiftly lead the anti-slavery movement. ( ibid)

In fact that those leaders used to meet regularly in order to resist against all kinds of slavery and racism such as Henry Highland Garnet and David Walker who revolted against their masters, this attempt was a self-decision by the black to continue liberation series and getting their nationalism . During the era of the civil war the struggle arose between the

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north and the south, this rebellion got a large political deal and the fugitive slaves got totally their freedom.

This era coincided with Abraham Lincoln's presidency in 1860, which followed the anti-slavery movement with his the Republic Party, whereas in the southerner states separated from the union and formed the Confederate State of America. Hence, the union is not fully free until The Emancipation Proclamation of the president Lincoln with the federal government decided to rebel the United States, in this context, depending on (Hine, et al 2004) the African American writer Frederick Douglass describes admiringly the celebration of the black for freedom and their sentiment as it is the most beautiful day in the American history in this lines:

“the effect of this announcement was startling beyond description, and the scene was wild and grand .joy and gladness exhausted all forms of expressions from shouts of praise to sobs and tears ....A Negro preacher, a man of wonderful vocal power, expressed the heartfelt emotion of the hour, when he led all voices in the anthem, sound the loud tumbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea Jehovah hath triumphed, his people were free.” ( p 206 )

Again , ( Lynch ,2019 ) portrays that the other African American authors such as William Well Brown Martin R. Delany and Frederick Douglass played a major role on helping the Union by recruiting the black armed forces and helped many slaves to escape from the Union. Later on the Union declared the thirteen, fourteen, fifteen amendment to give new constitutions of to slaves that currant their citizenship and giving their rights to vote.

In the other hand, the Federal Freedmen's Bureau gave slaves food, job, homes building, hospitals, school and universities by this way African Americans succeeded widely to reconstruct themselves and gaining a great political power. Though this power didn't complete because of the rebellion of the Whites in the south against the Blacks this rebellion

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is known as Ku Klux Klan ,this white supremacy returned racism and segregation back to the Union when they followed the doctrine ‘ separate but equal’.

After the reconstruction period African Americans worked hard to establish their own community in several fields such a literary, musical and historical achievements as the contributions of T. Thomas fortune and George Washington Williams in addition to the autobiography of Frederick Douglass in 1881, hence, the African American culture begins to emerge.

### **I-1-Lifestyle:**

The majority of the African Americans follow the American culture although they is a little different traditions that is special only for African American .however, there is a small category them who achieved their culture from the African traditions for instance teenagers are prepared well by their parents to know about spirituality and taking responsibility till their adulthood. By this way, they could protect and rise their culture and ideology instead of following such a specific rites. ( Brown ,2013)

Nowadays, they follow the jump the broon as it is one kind of their traditions that should practice during the wedding ceremony .Concerning rituals of death and funeral traditions, they used to gather their friends and families during dying , according to their religion and location ,they call the families before the death to notice them. of course, this meeting is followed by some spiritual and emotional values that refer to their tradition too.

This kind of spirituality is practicing rituals of death is also very necessary for African American’s culture .this rituals are done by the presence of the head of the religious community or clergy. The end of death for them should follow music and dance by their friends as in order to show that death should have a kind of celerity rather than it is viewed as a final. ( ibid, p 63-64)

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### I-2-Religion:

The majority of African Americans practice the protestant Christianity and about 14% of them are Muslims those who are settled in United State and Canada, This kind of Christianity began potentially showing the era of slavery when the black church was the right place for African Americans to practice their Christian worship because they were forbidden to practice any other free religion and they used to practice Christianity for the first time in a secret meetings, in the meantime, they practice dance ,shout, African rhythms, singing inside the church .

The role of the church during that time was to teach all people the principal of equality unlike the white society's church that is tends to be hypocritical because it makes people worship their masters .Whereas, the black church focuses on rising hope and equality everywhere. Then, African Americans welcomed all kinds of denomination in America to their church although the racial segregation of the white society who preferred to not interact with the other societies.

Besides African Americans churches focus on supporting African American's leaders, giving them different opportunities to make social relationships with Europeans by pastors, they were permitted to participate in Christmas day. There is another category African Americans follow the Islam religion in a period in which the Islam spread widely in the west of Africa, this spread began with a peaceful introduction that helped and guided them easily to worship especially in the tribes from The Southerner Sahara and Berbers to the north during the slave period, hence a great number of African Americans Muslims owned the Islamic identity although their ancestors were not Muslims.

Moreover, there is another category African Americans who followed Judaism, Buddhism and other religion like Hebrew Israelite which belongs to the Jewish organization.

( Ibid, p 62-63)

### **I-3-Clothing:**

Generally, African Americans male follow very specific style in clothing since they used to make their cloths by themselves. Before they walk barefoot, wearing a simple cheap chaos, whereas the black female depends on the help of their female servants. Of course, this kind of cloths are made of local production of cotton or wool. They wear two outfits or jacket, sometimes with a wool cap and great coats.

When they were slaves, they wear two simple pretty dresses that are made of calico or homespun sometimes they wear capes or cloaks and usually using kerchief or bonnets. During slavery days the masters were responsible for their slave workers their children too and it was a duty to wearing them especially the white masters who were from the anti-abolitionist category.

The black woman everywhere love to change the color of their cloths time to time with dyes, which are derived from berries, roots, walnut shells, oak leaves or indigo, with this way, they succeeded to create a different style of clothing.

Moreover, the black woman is famous stiffly by wearing petti coat, beautiful skirts from grapevines, all this cloths is organized well with a color kerchief. Almost all the black women have a curved hair using rouge that made from berries, their perfume is made from honeysuckle, by this specific tradition, the black women succeeded to create a distinct style for them. (Hine et al, 2004, p 116-117)

### **I-4-Health:**

African Americans or the slaves before suffered from major health problems probably because of low birth weight diet and almost because their kind of slaves, in this case they are vulnerably suffer from dangerous disease and probably lead to death. they got sick because of they work for a long time outside their homes especially those who live in the south in the hot summer, they also frequently drink the polluted water in addition to their food which is totally unhealthy.

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Diseases are largely spread in the south as the mosquito-borne diseases, all kinds of bacteria and viruses are spread widely from one generation to another, this bad situation continued horribly to spread as those diseases which came from Europe like the malaria, hookworm and the yellow fever which came from Africa. The dairy products that the blacks refer to was the source of lactose intolerance. Generally the African Americans had a bad health situation especially before which refer to their bad historical background. (ibid, p117)

Furthermore, while they worked they also lost the calcium; all these bad conditions create a bad healthy situation these sermons suffering was shown clearly in this quotation by the historian Donald R. Wright:

“blindness or inflamed and watery eyes; lameness or crooked limbs; loose, missing or rotten teeth; and skin sores. Also, they made African Americans much more apt than whites to suffer from a number of often fatal diseases – tetanus, intestinal worms, diphtheria, whooping cough, pica (or dirt eating), pneumonia, tuberculosis, and dysentery”. (Hine et al, p 117)

### **I-5-Education**

In the increasing racial segregation during the period of 1810s and 1860s the education of the African American was almost tensioned because the public education that had a compulsory taxation for children in the United States, other schools permitted the education separately such as the Ohio in 1850. This racism is unfortunately appeared clearly inside the white society which is because the white parents who forbade their children to learn with the black community. They used to look on the Blacks as they are primitive who hadn't any cultural capacity, for them they lacked to a quality of education.

This situation made the African American leaders, with other category from the whites that were against slavery, started to build a private schools for black children here, the

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public system build schools which established by the prince hall in 1798 ,later on it became a part from the Boston' s school system.

Black started to build a free school in 1787 by the help of the New York society of slaves, but it was not enough satisfied because it lacks to funding, the black couldn't support it as a result later or it was neglected as it caused the poor education in the north. The relationship between Whites and Blacks is described as 'marginalized', this made the black leaders focusing on building back the separated schools rather than integrated. They didn't agree with the marginalized view of the white towards them, meanwhile Frederick Douglass during the slavery era in 1845 and his allies began to integrate the school in many areas except Boston's school.

In response to this segregation the African American recorded a great success on a achieving their education especially during the antebellum period. They succeeded to build their own schools although they were marginalized and suffered from the racial segregation. (Ibid ,p 135-136 )

### **I-6 Oral tradition:**

Generally Africans used to maintain their tradition and art to their sons through the art tradition itself, for (Brown, 2013) it was told deliberately as a stories for one generation to another .this black culture is used frequently to create the hope and education to struggle against poverty and slavery, in the meantime for achieving the personal freedom and as well as for obtain a good life by their traditions. For this reason, African Americans felt disappointed because they wanted to fulfill their emancipatory gains, it is seasonality to preserve their tradition with storytelling simply because they were forbidden from the formal education. So this way is considered a suitable way for them to preserve their history and their culture too.

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Of course, this culture and traditions are used just orally not in a written form from one generation to another through telling stories as well as the folktales of the African Americas was also a mean of education that is used to protect their culture.

There are a great number of African Americans folktales for instance Tales that of John Henry, The Uncle Remus stories by Joel Chandler Harris that helped potentially raising the values of African American folks. Also, there is another significant story that had its effect in the culture of African Americans like “Signifying Monkey” and “The Ballad of Shine and The Legend of Stagger Lee”.

Indeed the effect of African oral traditions is shown clearly through different ways for example; and it appears like a way of preaching as well as performing not just as simple stories, here the target of the idea appears through the tone, volume and the cadence of the speaker that appears his action and getting a general idea of the sermon even that this sermon contains song dance versa.

In other context, music especially blue and jazz with all its forms and rhetoric are dozens, signifying, trash talk ,rhyming, semantic inversion and a word play are also different kinds of African American oral traditions. In addition to Rap Music since 1980s that became another source of their oral culture. In this sense, the United States Census Bureau define African Americans as “people having origins in any of the black race group of Africa” to show that Africans have American origins they are their ancestors.

However , slavery during the early time was an great obstacle for African Americans in practicing their culture , but fortunately they succeeded to evaluate and reach their culture to the Europeans in this context, slavery was another reason for African Americans preservation's their culture, thus their identity too. It is reasonable that its effect will be positive later on, their culture became creative and famous , but after the emancipation era it developed into distinctive in all its kinds; tradition, art, music literature and religions.

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Hence, African Americans tried deliberately to separate themselves from the American culture in order to protect and dealing only with their own traditions without the interference of the Americans people. Also, another reason is about their attempting to achieve their own culture and make it a distinct culture from the Americans culture too. (p58-59)

### **I-7-Music:**

According to Brown African American's music is originally came by the ethnic groups buy Africa from the western Sahelean and Sub-Saharan regions, this category focus on spreading the music through the history to be one kind from the African American oral traditions especially during the period slavery. The African American music is seen clearly in percussion, improvisation call and response using swing and blue notes and the use of falsetto as well as using such a complex multipart-harmony.

The perfect song of African Americans is “lift a very voice and sing” in addition to their national anthem, “The star spangle banner” which was written by James Wilson and John Rosamond Johnson in 1900 to refer to the birthday of Abraham Lincoln. This song was famous and popular for all African Americans since it expresses their desire,, challenge resistance and their hope for life .those two famous songs are widely sung in African American schools and churches.

During the nineteen century, thanks of black minstrel the African American music spread inside the American people. While in the beginning of the twentieth century many African American’s music was adopted by the American society because of the emergence of technological innovation such as radios, records, jazz, blues and during 1910s this time is called by the jazz age.

In the middle of the twentieth century, rock, roll doo wop became famous among the white society but in 1970 they started to use rhyming Slang .then Hip Hop which is another kind of music that spread in African American's society .Indeed the Hip Hop is still a sign of

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the African American's culture during the contemporary age .it remains for a long time in addition to other different forms of music.

( p 66-67)

### **I-8 Museum:**

African American's museum tends to present and highlight the African American's history, it plays an important role on protecting the African American's legacy and culture. It appeared almost during 1950s and 1960s of course, it is existed in African America institution and neighborhoods such as the African American Museum and Library in Oakland in addition to the African museum in Cleveland.

The museum represents the cultural heritage that is created by African Americans in order to protect their traditions and cultural legacy ,they preserve their museum by using their own language or their vernacular English rather than using the American Standard English.

( Ibid,p 61-62)

### **Conclusion**

This is, certainly, a period from which the African American call for equality rejected the racist theory, struggling for freedom is the most important aim for them.

Then, the African Americans community succeeded to build their own culture strongly through establishing their history inside America in general.

Slavery is a shameful issue for the white society, it is didn't need to be portrayed, whereas for African Americans is considered as a personal achievement because they gain their liberation after a long time of suffering, the history could not deny that anymore.

## **Chapter Two**

# **The Contribution of Contemporary African American literature in American Culture**

## **Chapter Two: The Contribution of Contemporary African American literature in American Culture**

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### **Introduction**

This chapter is an attempt firstly to give a general literary background about the beginning of the African Americans literature as well as providing the major literary significant works during the contemporary age.

Also, its development through different periods starting with the achievement of golden age ‘the Harlem renaissance’ to ‘the civil rights movements or the black art movement’ to ‘the reconstruction era’ , and ‘the black woman movement’. Of course, all this periods portray the major contemporary literary works of African Americans and its significance as they are written with different ways about depicting the slavery and racism as the most topics that are discussed in those periods.

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### II- 1- The Beginning of the Contemporary of the African American Literature :

African American literature depending on (Douglass & Rowe, 2000 ) essentially begins with the oral performance by some African American descendants. African literature tends to show the different psychological and physical horrors of their lives, But this literature didn't appear until the eighteen century because the slaves before had not the opportunity to write and to achieve literacy.

Rebellion gave them more consciousness that reflects their lies in a written form which appeared in the eighteen century and after the abolitionist movement, African American literature developed to be written an a new way of accounting the ex-slave and fugitive slave their real life as last works of Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of The Life Olaudah Equiano or Gustaus Vassa , the African Written by Himself* (1789), Frederick Douglass's *autobiography, narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845),and Martin Robinson Delay's *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored people of the Unite States* (1852).

But in the nineteen century, the way of the written African American literature was different, it began to move African American literary tradition that used to improve the African American' s heritage and their self-identity, into another way of playwrights which changed to encourage the interference and the acceptance of the white society, this new idea about and interference of miscegenation are the center of interact of slavery for other writer such as in William Well's Browne's *Cotel ; or, The President's Daughter* (1853), and his play *The Escape* (1858).While Martin Delany' *Blake; or, the huts of America* portrays slavery as

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way of economic exploitation. In this context this economic plunder was embodied in Frank Webb's *their friend* (1857).

In another context, during this late of the nineteen century Charles Waddell Chestnut's fiction portrays a different racism which is considered as a deterministic force which vitiates the African American lives of his novel *The House Behind The Cedar* (1900) which explores some problems that creating an attempt by a near white Mulatto to interact and feel as white. While *the Marrow of Tradition* (1901) portrays the result of the slavery after the period that followed the civil war. Whereas the period between 1899 and 1908 the minister Sutton Griggs described the racist patriotism and separatism in his work *Imperium in Imperio* (1899) and had a racial reconciliation end *Pointing the Way* (1908).

In the other hand, Ellen Watkins Harper succeeded with a great effect by their abolitionist poetry as well as her novel, *Iola Le Roy* (1892) and the novelist Paul Laurence Dunbar is well-known by his way of writing about the issue of exploitation of the black heritage, Dunbar's work shows the self-denigration side not like the nationalist African American's work of Frederick Douglass, He is concerned only with the negritude poetry during the twentieth century, he gains the national fame by the help and the recommendation of William Dean Howell in the beginning of "Lyrics, of *Lowly Life* (1896).

During period the late of the nineteen century and the beginning of the twentieth century people who belong to the middle class that lead by W.E.B Dubois and James Weldon Johnson worked hard to fight against the racial justice using a political and a literary way, those to writers especially Johnson tried to reveal the American negro's cultural background and rising the consciousness in his autobiography *Along this Way* (1933) during the era of Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s.

This era is characterized by describing the blackness and the African heritage thanks of many African American intellectuals and artists, Alain Locke's is the head of Harlem

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school who used to support 'The New Negro' by his work *The New Negro* (1925). During this period many literary achievements were done such as Countee Cullen's *color* (1925) and *the Ballad of The Brown Girl* (1927), Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923), Langston Hughes's *The Weary Blues* (1926), and Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* (1928) and *Banjo* (1929) in addition to the achievements of James Baldwin. Here, African American literature during the Harlem era witnessed a great rebellion against anti-imperialist power of the colonizer, it was considered as an attempt of highlighting the nationalism of the Blacks as well as reviewing the stereotype of the west towards the black culture as it is for them the culture exoticness. In another context Langston Hughes's work *Not Without Laughter* (1930) tries to argue that importance of joy and laughter as they are the main reasons for sociopolitical responsibility.

Besides, African American's writing during 1929 started to look for the importance of the racial oppression which coincided with the stock market crash and the economic depression, for example the writer Arna Bontemps's *Black Thunder* (1936) explains the issue of slavery in Virginia, Whereas, Richard Wright's work *Native Son* (1940) had a great effect as it is a realistic novel which explores the violence African American life that caused because of the oppression which could lead the human being to destroy their psychological state. Ralph Ellison's *invisible man* (1952) portrays the identity quest and improves the negative effects of the acceptance of society as a theme was seen as an attempt to deny the African American reality. By his different topics he succeeded to make his work mixture of classicism and modernity.

During this era James Baldwin explored the different psychological and sociological themes such as the homosexuality between and father-son as it became another new topic that discussed relationships in this *Go Tell It On The Mountain* in 1953, and *Another Country* in 1962. In addition to other relations of racism such as *The First Next Time* next (1963).

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In the other hand, the black movement in the era of the civil right during 1960s and 1970s created a new to become different way of writing a black aesthetic era. This later is mainly founded and accounted by the political series of the King Martin Luther, Malcolm *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965), and Eldridge Cleaver (*Soul On Ice*, 1967) in addition to the mainstream of Martin Luther King's series in politics to Imamu Amiri Baraka's success on portraying the black aesthetic through *Dutchman* (1964), concentrating on the significance of the role the black artist in American.

Toni Morrison's *Bluest Eye* (1970) also is considered as a great work because she portrays the racial denigration, and probably it was a very attractive subject during the era of establishing the aesthetic product in American for Africans. Alex Haley succeeded in his work *Roots* (1976) on focusing on being the of racial experiences of the African Americans as well as exploring the of the African American's suffering inside the American nation. On the other hand, Toni Cade Bambara wrote *The Black Woman* (1970) she concentrates on woman's struggle which was written in a different way, *The Salt Eaters* (1980) and *If Blessing Comes* (1987) and her purpose is to encourage women to engage to struggle for freedom with a written way.

The African American feminism gained a great success since 1970s starting with the noble prize for literature in 1993 of Toni Morrison of her writing about the racial experience of the black women in America. Concerning violence of male-female or raping subject was widely spread, this development on writing are discussed literally in the contemporary age such as *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* (1969) by Maya Angelou. And again *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) in addition to the works of Richard Wright's *Native Son* and *Land Today* (1963) are pertinent an attempt of exploring the black women's suffering both from male and racism.

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The African American literature witnessed a great success simply because it rebuilds the literature of self-assertion, it is remains strong among the power of American culture as well as among the different development of both the American and the European culture in the contemporary age. ( p 6-7 )

### **II- 2-The Contribution of Contemporary African American literature on American Society:**

According to ( Quentin, 2016) , the black authors started to write about their lives taking serious responsibilities and great consciousness, of Course, It is so complex especially during the contemporary age, it improves to difficulties of writers to make a balance between their duties and their capacities to write about their historical experiences such as racism, in this context Hughes's 1926 essay *The Negro Artist and The Racial Mountain* and *The New Negro Renaissance* argues that African writers were different from Americans especially during the Harlem Renaissance. The history of African American literature began with the history of slaves form the seventeen century by the European colonization.

Besides, this suffering was continuous until the abolishment of slavery, those slaves suffered from the racial discrimination with in addition to other psychological and physical exploitation. After the era of the civil right, the passage of Anti -segregation and legislation in 1954 and the voting Righting legislation in the 1960 the African American society started to remove the racial attitude .In 1970s and 1980s even here, the violence against African American was eliminated .Of course, thus African Americans began the age of literacy whereas the writers started to portray another kind of slavery called the slave narratives. This experience of slave is involved to be written a lot during the early of nineteen century. At the end the slavery, writers begin to engage into imaginative forms of literature either fiction, drama, on poetry .before literary works were realistic but after it developed into a literary of

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imagination to reach a high degree of artistic freedom during the beginning of the twentieth century country. This development was highly seen during the Harlem Renaissance in 1920, the work have are artistic spirit combined with issues of racism calling for equality and legal institution through literature. . (ibid)

Richard Wright and other like Ralph Ellison, Ann petry, James Baldwin, Gwendolyn Brooks, Margaret Walker and Lorraine Hansberry in 1940s and 1950s explore their works with contradictions, discontentment and rage, in which the time coincided with psychological and the social state of the black life in American.

In the other hand, around 1960s to the black art movement appeared to assume to be black by literature this movement led by Larry Neal , Amiri Baraka, Addison Gayle , Jr Sonia Sanchez and Ashia Touré , those writers insisted to enter to the nation of Islam leader Malcolm X to create a radical change as well as they insisted to make a great importance to gender role as a result raising the women's voice, the feminist movement approximately in 1970s and 1980s during this decades Toni Morrison flourished her voice in 1987 with *beloved* which was considered a great literary work in 1993 when she won the Nobel prize .

Also the vernacular tradition a literature was there as a an attempt of change by the black Art movement in the contemporary African American literature it developed to look for different subjects instead of race, identity and failure. Whereas, there is a different black works that remains in the African Americans' memory such as James Baldwin in his novel *Giovanni's Room* in 1956, hence he makes his work full of homo-sexuality, without making his work diverged also his friend William Styron wrote in the 1967 *The Confession of Nat Turners* by exploring the slavery in his work. The black writers during this era made their literally effort to deal with, only with the black affairs and the African Americans' traditions.

In addition, whenever slavery before it was shameful issue for some categories of some African Americas, but it became not later on ,exactly when some African writers started

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to develop their way of writing to become another kind of slave narratives in the contemporary age especially when it was written from the perspective of the slaves narratives. Indeed other writers such as Ishmael Reed, Earnest Gaines, Alex Haley, Toni Morrison Octavia Butler, Edward P. Jones, Thylia Moss and others were insisted to write about the slavery and the way that it is abolished through their works. (ibid p2-7)

Furthermore, the African American literature developed frequently throughout different eras and movements, here, this are the major works during the major eras:

### **II-2-1– The Harlem Renaissance Era:**

Concerning the Harlem Renaissance era , (Ziane , 2016) in her dissertation is agree that this era had a great effect during the period 1900s and 1940s especially after the First World War (1914- 1918) during the period that followed the civil right era in the African American writing , since it portrays the African American's soldiers on losing their live in response to their participation the war. Hence, the Harlem renaissance increases highly because of their request for their right of the nationality and their population .during this era the black music especially the blues and jazz have been emerged .The writer of this era are Zola Neal Hurston, Dorothy West and Claude McKay, for instance *The Wealthy Blues* by Hughes and *Mules and Men* by Huston (1925) are the major works in this period.

Other writers improved in drama by treating the slavery issue such as Angelina weld Grimke and Marita Bonner, this writing develops from the slavery quest to writing about freedom.

African American writers first it refer writers of the new generation who are proud of their blackness. Of Course, they have a social personal aims concerning improving the equality, they used to follow the political issues as a different way of writing different in

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purpose of on engaging on political aims in addition to the emergence of some feminist writing and a black aesthetics.

It is called also the Negro movement in which it deals with the African origins and roots during the contemporary era. Of course the significant role of this movement is very strong as what Dr Gloria C Johnson viewed that the Harlem renaissance is the center of African American intellectual life in 1920 as well as it this movement achieved a great effects over the country itself because it succeeded to make people go to achieve a cultural orientations that comes from poetry, jazz, music, or even the African American history writing the contemporary age. Langston Hughes is the writer who influenced a lot by the Harlem Renaissance and His writing following the idea of hope and pride, he was the central figure of the Harlem Renaissance era that is developed through magazines. (ibid, p10-11)

### **II- 2-2 -The Civil right or the Black Art Movement:**

Generally, the civil Right Movement according to ( Miniotaité ,2017) refers to the social , political and cultural developments during the beginning of 1960 in American , it spread in time in which the black power raised women' s voice , the Revolution of the civil Rights quests and dunned during the era of Martin Luther King ,J R , the Civil Rights ,Activist Malcolm X , those this leader tried to help African American to obtain their values by their works.

During the 1960s and 1970s many African American writers started to produce their work in purpose of rising the power of the Blacks and their culture as well as they wrote with a very artistic and cultural way through seminal books *Black Fire: An anthology of Afro-American writing* ( 1968) and *The Black Aesthetics* (1971), the first work detains it its effects on the black audience because it coincided with the time of the assassination of the Martin

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Luther, Jr in 1968, so it seems like a kind of rebellion and revolution, those works in the meantime the clarifies the relationships between art and life.

Morrison in *Negritude and Soul* reflects the spiritual conditions of the African Americans, other literary works depicted militant, racist and nationalist views through, the father of the black art movement Imamu Amiri Baraka who wrote deliberately about the superiority of the Blacks by exploring the values of blackness and portraying how the Black are proud by their blackness. Other figures like Sonia Sanchez, Ed Bullins, Don L. Lee and Gwendolyn Brooks are interested of writing about African American blackness.

It is reasonable that the beginning of the black art movement and the black aesthetics refer originally to the artists of New Negro movement of 1920. Hence, the bulk of the black arts movement's writers combined together in order to achieve their dunned by specifying the African- American arts taking nationalism the main subject in their writing .In the meantime choosing writing about the aesthetic separatism by avoiding definitely the dialogue with the white society.

Furthermore, Richard Wright ( 1908-1960), James Baldwin( 1924-1987), Ralph Ellison( 1919-1944) are African American writers who belong to the civil rights movement Indeed those writers choose to write about the experience of human being through their history as well as they show the black material , also they to make a suitable balance between the blackens of the writer himself and the external factors.

Wright's *Native Son* (1940) and Ellison's *The Invisible Man* (1952) are written with a philosophical way with was oriented by existentialism side .Hence, these works tend to describe the alienation of the black and their losing their identified .Here, it difficult for them to find and to invent themselves on the other hand those works are an attempt to show the discriminative and humiliation and suffering inside the white society because of racism. (ibid p 28-32)

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On other hand, the autobiographical work of Wrights *The Black Boy* (1945) and *American Hunger* (1977) portray the phases of life of the human being in the north in which they identify the identity as it is a personal social and cultural construct for humanity hence human should suffer and struggle for her , as in his first works he starts improving the phenomenon of denying identity of African Americans .Richard, Wright was famous on his writing by his blackness, and he used to write frequently about the black race ,this second works also is full representation of American myth of personal reinvention and in attempting to construct the African American identity. However, in his work *The Outsider* (1953) portrays his young black protagonist who started to search for his identity but the authors in his later works *Black Power* (1954), *White Man Listen* (1957) and treat the black Nationalism, so by his works may writers from 1960 those who belong to the black aesthetics saw him as a forerunner, simply he succeeds to use his artistic writing as a weapon to convey his literary message perfectly because literature for him should be didactic too. In the meantime it is the suitable way to construct the consciousness as well as he saw that emigration in writing play an important role in awareness and the attempting of change.

In the works of Baldwin race is founded, and identity also is the center of his works too, he portrays His characters as they were obliged to enter within the American society .the sense of security as well as he treated the themes of sexuality , he also states this work *Go Tell It On The Mountain* (1953) treats the self-knowledge religions side and sexual exploitation . *Another Country* (1962) which portrays homosexuality and *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961) which shows the racial issue.

*The Invisible Man* of Ellison portrays the theme of identity and the experience of African American journey by describing the human invisibility as a metaphor. Briefly, this work reflects the socio- historical conditions of the life during the twentieth century; it

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portrays Blackness, injustice, irresponsibility and oppression. All those themes to clarify the African 'attempt to resist the power of civilization and escaping from racism. (ibid)

### II- 2-3 –The Reconstruction Era:

this era is famous by its literary values and its specific intellectual culture, because some scholars focused on making this era as a of attempt to embody southern thoughts change deriving their writing from the period of the slavery and the civil right Movement and the struggle for freedom since the Proclamation of Emancipation, of course, this era depending on (O'Neil , 2017) has a an important role on rising the self-awareness of African Americans who try to rebuild again the African American's s life. For instance *Unvanquished* by William Faulkner who writes his work to portray the position of families during the last days of the civil war and the early days of that belong to the reconstruction era , he embodies his work like *The Dreams of The Old South* , focusing on moral issues as and he improves that hope is important to realize dreams especially when in a racial society .

In other hand, *Jubilee* by Margaret walker who portrays slavery as a main theme describing the Negro women born as slaves. Also *The House Behind The Cedars* by Charles W Chestnutt , which portrays the racism with its negative effects, and how slave are prejudiced. *Grone With The Wind* by Margret Mitchell improves how the war, defeat, terrors, could affect the personality of people. *Beloved* by Toni Morrison Also is another famous work which has its impact inside and onside the black community it contains a plenty of dramatic subjects. Whereas, *Cannon* by Donald McClain which explores the struggle against racism showing the meaning of loss of the personality as well as states the predicament of poverty all this characteristics are written by with panoramic way during reconstruction era .this era actually witnessed a great consciousness because of the works of the black writers .who started to show the word that they strong and they equal to the American people.

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### **II- 2-4-The Black Feminist Movement:**

The Black women Movement emerges because of the liberation Movement by some black women they want argue that they are against racism and oppression as well as their suffering from sexuality ,thus they tried to engage on liberation Movement in order to show that they are strong, they have the ability to confront the social and cultural obstacles and to improve that they are against discrimination, in this context they succeeded to create their National black Feminist Organization in the New York in 1973.

Black women follow the liberation movement to show that they are against sexism, this movement coincided with the attempt of resistance of the Blacks against racism because the black male also suffered a lot against racism more than the black women, racism for male expresses their loss of manhood, in order words women tried to exploit this position and making their personal freedom from men too.

The Majority of black male during the movement tried to control the black women sexuality, according to other political view which improve that the black male are extremely responsible for their denomination and that they help the white men to exploit their bodies .Hence, although this view is seen as paradoxical, but political view improve this., the black women' s goal is realizing equality by rising the consciousness inside the white society as well as the black community.

When black women feel that they are not free they entered to participate in the feminist movement during 1960 unlike the white women who have their universal right black women started to participate in conference and studies 's courts in order omit the marginalized view of the white that they are black , backward coming from the third world. In other terms, they began deliberately to portray their views with culturally and literary.

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Black women during feminist movement faced major problems either with the sexism, or with racist view of the white women. in this case for them they have no more than two choices: they maintain in the movement and trying to educate non -black women and male and trying to satisfying their needs, or they begin directly to create their own movement by this way, the black women 's power emerges

Furthermore, Alice walker used the term womenism to describe the black feminist movement she writes: “ womanist is feminist as purple is to lavender” to show succinctly that personality refers women pride, culture, history, their freedom from males’s exploitations.

In this context, black movement in 1970s focus on struggling against racial and sexual and against the class oppression in addition their attempt to raise their political views inside the American society.

Thus, the black woman to a large extent succeeds to address the negative side of sexism, racism and classism during the black liberation movement era. (“But Some of Us Brave: a History of The Black Feminism in The United States”).

the black feminist writing according (Miniotaité, 2017) comes after the black woman’s consciousness after a series of liberation towards freedom, African American writers such as Gloria Naylor ,Toni Gade Bambara , Shirely Anne William, Gayl Jones explore cultural and racial themes in addition to Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Maya Angelou who choose to write about the African American literary tradition Focusing on female friendship ,racial oppression and identity.

The black feminist writing tends to focus on her struggle against man 's abusing portraying herself in a positive light as what Shirley claims

“that such contemporary change in African-American literary tradition because they have been transforming the strategies African –American women's writers as Morrison and Walker in their fiction mark a pivotal

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used by earlier African American novelists who not only challenged negative images imposed on black women but employed an innovative style of writing such as ‘interlocutory’ dialogue style and giving voice to multiple settings in time and place”. (p 42-43)

in this words ,she contentedly is agree with the professionalism of the black woman writer as she succeeds in the contemporary age to deal effectively with diverse themes in a very artistic way as a kind of challenge .

In another the context, African American writing succeed to explore race , gender and sexism ,this success is pertinent founded in Morrison writing in which she explores the effects of racism and violence's experiences as well as the slavery in her Works *Beloved* ( 1987), *Mercy* (2008) here , she describes the effects of slavery on the psychological states on the blacks by interfering the experiences of the past and accepting the present of course not like the last views ,she also treats other themes such as inferiority , immorality , irresponsibility whereas in other works such as the *Bluest Eyes* (1970) in which she expresses the beauty of the black woman and how she attracts the white man . in addition to other works such as *The Songs of Solomon* 1977( *Sula* )1973, *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1998) and *The Unspeakable Things Unspoken* (1988) which portray the marginalization of the black community .(ibid)

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### **Conclusion**

This last chapter actually improves the Attempts African American authors and how they start to defend their culture using literary works as a weapon, in the meantime this literary writings are example of how human being is able to fight against exploitation as a result gaining a personal strength breaking down all kinds of obstacles that they put in their ways.

Those literary works are obviously a way in which they try to depict their experiences of slavery and racism's experiences, however certain views improve the contradiction which lead us addressing it criticality in the next chapter.

**Chapter Three**  
**A Literary Criticism of Contemporary**  
**African American Literature**

## **Chapter Three: A Literary Criticism of Contemporary African American Literature**

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### **Introduction**

Although African American literature obtains a great deal in the American nation as it is accepted as a significant literature in the United States but in the meantime, the newest views are discussed differently from multiple perspectives.

Actually some critics blame the African American authors on their exaggerating that they depict their historical experiences especially those which are concerned with the racism oppression marginalization and slavery. They try to a large extent to ignore the value of the black literature in terms of that it does not portray the black people in positive view and exploring a common themes , in this context those previous works are discussed again with a new views in this chapter.

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### III- 1- The reflection of Jim Crow's views on African American literature in American Society:

Since African American writers used to write about the previous themes, critics continue to review the African American writing differently starting by Jim Crow's view. In this context, (Rudds,2017) focuses on the psychological and the spatial side of the African Americans, he improves that African American writers should write about the situation of American's lives too, simply because they live in same country sharing the same suffering, whereas the black writers focus only on African Americans. Hence, this problem logically touch every African American who live with them, for him the problem is about social integration of the black comments, so they deliberately choose to separate themselves from the American citizens.

Indeed critics refers their literary views on blaming the black writers on exploiting their history, especially their experiences of segregation, racism and oppression which make their literature lacked to its value , since their writings are concerned with subjects that record the past. But in the meantime, it looks as a construction of space that is given because of the segregation's theme in their literature.

In one hand, Brian Norman in this book *Neo- Segregation Narratives* (2010) argues that this literature is of fragmentation is seen as temporal , then deliberately influenced by some authors who confront the *Defecto Spectar* of Jim Crow . Whereas Kenneth warren argues that the A African American literature is limited simply because its major themes are repeated frequently such as race project which improves the black inferiority, he clarifies that it should be more integrates to the world not specific to their community as it deals with such historical experience like racism , thus it will disappear .

In the other hand, Raymond William strictly improves as that literature is “dependent on the cultural system within which [its] notations are current, as well as, in a secondary way,

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one the social and economic system within which they are distributed". (p 6 ) In one side, is agree with the point of view of warren in which he describes that the African American as literature is like an urban landscape that is seen nowadays. for him is this last view does not only show the racist era but , in the same time , it is an attempt to get a general overview about the different periods of African American literature and understanding those periods that contain oppression.

Thus, this is seen in clearly in the African American works *Native Son* and of Richard Wrights and *The Street* by Ann Petry in 1946 their focusing on the injustice and unfair that came from the racial discrimination . In the other hand, the writer improves that literature, here, is alterative whereas it should be , it tends to show the traditional and cultural side by using deliberately the racist subject to exploit the situation in which they live in a hard condition .(p 6-7)

Moreover, concerning the work different views that discuss *The Writing beyond Race: Living Theory and Practice* confesses:

“Today, class differences coupled with racial integration have created a cultural context where the very meaning of blackness and its impact on our lives differs greatly among black people. There is no longer a common notion of shared black identity.” ( p 231)

The suffering of the African Americans is obvious and nobody could deny this truth that started from the earlier time , this suffering appear clearly on the separation even inside their families between and their children who used to be strangers just for searching for job and earning them or they may search for finding their education or any other purpose all this reasons and this suffering lead them to be marginalized and exploited because of the of racism .

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Once again, Kenneth Warren's study about African American literature in his work "What was African American Literature" in which he improves different points of views, for instance; he portrays the identity and culture and reality of this community, in the meantime, he opens the dialogue between white and black, in which he improves that that suffering refers the period of the election of the black president that make then engaging to call for their dunned, or maybe he tries to refer to omit the American racism, all this ideas are probably existed and they might create a new view which could omit the old view that reveal positively the representation of the black image, under this situation, Kenneth improves the black's suffering for him it is reasonable to keep race on the same time where the white supremacy to make a balance between the two societies, in the other terms African American literature for Warren is a kind of identity product that could change through the time, in the meantime it is not a retrospective project as what other critics improved, it is a series of historical experiences that create a real image inside the American society. Thus, it is not distinguished by its different idea as the other literature but it is pertinent a full reaction of their realities. (p 231-232)

According to (Martin, 2016) views that the majority of the scholars and historians are agree that the black works are criticized a lot because they wrote only for the black readership rejecting the idea of integration in the this context, African American writing become 'separatist' especially after the golden age during the decades of 1940 and 1950, this means that African American writing become 'uniquely black' instead of the following the universality in literature. Except some works of James Baldwin and Lorraine Hansberry in companion to the majority of African American writers. (p34)

From a different context, some critics used to identify the black and their works even the feminist, in which he responded in these lines to improve the value of African American works, he states:

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“ We find now among black and white critics of African-American literary theory solid proponents of both these works of thoughts: those who argue convincingly that only critically identified black ‘ Windows’ should be used to look at black-authored creative works ( many feminist make the same argument for women's writing ) and others, like Georges Poulet and Trudier Harris, who argue that black academics should have more tools to apply to black- authored texts, not fewer. proponents of this latter idea would argue, first, that if more critical tools are used, even though those tools may be of European origin, black-authored works stand a better chance of being read, interpreted, taught and eventually, inserted into the canon; and second, that a syncretic approach to criticism fits both the literature and that immensely culturally syncretic group, “African-American,” who produce it . Thus, we understand the “Unique cultural product” (literature by African Americans ) better as we also come to know the “ unique” cultural group better . the syncretists would deem the sharing of such in group knowledge with the exogamous mainstream as important and good the separatists (who write in Phoenician alphabets) would argue that blacks are once again giving away enhanced, hard cultural currency for free.” (p34-35)

Of course, those black literary separatists succeeded to portray effectively the problems of slaves, in this sense those separatists succeeded to construct the blacks and helping the black syncretism to raise their cultural product such as the jazz and blues.

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Although many critics argued that African American themes are unique or valid as it is a literature dealing with a specific themes but it succeeded to open the conversation between white and Black. Even those authored text have become an important part in the contemporary study. This latter study gathers the two schools to show it values in literature in literature of the Black showing its effects in the past, present and perhaps in the next decades, thus it remains still memorable nowadays. ( p 34-36)

### **III-2-Selected Critical views of The Black Aesthetics and separatism in American society:**

Moreover, other critics argued that “these is no black aesthetics, for there is no white aesthetics” ( Dieng , 2009, p 6 ) which means that they deliberately deny their aesthetic writing that emerged during the Harlem Renaissance era, to formulate the black aesthetic writing is criticized a lot by some critics whereas Dubois argue that the black writes should help his people as they are black and call the other writer to catch their African culture. (p 6-8)

In the other hand Langston Hughes in his work *The Negro Artist and Racial Mountain* improves the role of art, rejecting racism, valuing the African American literary heritage by revealing their culture in literature. The black writing during the golden age leads to the self-conscious of the negro by art like jazz , blues , sermonic rituals and spiritual.in this sense Hughes improves the value of the African American 's literature from their self-aspiration of culture and shows the rising of the black aesthetics is developed because of the African Americans 's marginalization and oppression, it improve their social and political and cultural situations, in this context , Houston Baker Jr argues: “ Generational Shifts and The Recent Criticism of Afro-American literature,” “ The dominant critical perspective on African American literature during the late 1950s and early 1960s might be called the poetics

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of integration”, Baker , here, tries to show the ideological orientation influenced by the effect of integration at the end of segregation that is caused by the racism. (p 9).

Richard Wright also improves that the African American literature is a part of American literature referring to the doctrine “separate but equal” in which he tries to improve the value of this literature by rising the equality between race and experiences through literature showing the power of experience and its effects on literary side (p9). In this view, many of African American writers like Baraka Ammiri , Larry Neal, Henderson and Addison Gayle welcome on the idea of idea integration later on.

Besides, The Black Art Movement during 1960s succeeds on developing the negro Art in America for Hughes and wright' s points of views, engaging to react against some critics to show the power of the blacks aesthetics highlighting the effects of the movement and its great rote on revealing the African American culture and tradition and in the meantime ignoring the white culture ,here, Neal , Baraka and Gayle addressed the values of the black literature ,in this context Carolyn clarifies this ides in this lines:

“the black writer and his role,” has been in instrumental in changing the role of black writer as image-maker. Tough the exploitation of the past and the reveal of the western mythology and symbolism, the black writer “destroys the zero and the negative image- myths” of the black community by “ turning them inside out .” (p11)

In the other hand, August Wilson responds positively to the development of the black literature through the experience of slaves, as he states to support the black power movement, his admirable views about African American achievements this lines:

“ feeds the sprits and celebrates the life of black American by designing its strategies for survival and prosperity “.He also

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confesses that: “ the brilliant explosion of black arts and letters of 1960s remains, for me , the hallmark and the signpost that points the way to our contemporary work on the some ground” (p13)

### **III-3- The Effects of Contemporary Collective Criticism of African American Literature in American Culture:**

In the other side ,depending on (Tyson, 2006) the African American criticism has a strong relationship with history of African American from the middle passage to the main periods that we have discussed in the later chapter, of course, the black literature deals with different topics notably racism and slavery but in the contemporary age the American literature tends to clarifies the background of the black American effectively more than before, in purpose of presenting the Americans in a good way without discussing the slavery’s experience from the middle passage and their suffering and abusing by their masters, here, it looks like a kind of ignorance from the American people.

Taking a good example to explore this idea from the point of view of the writer , the slavery as a main experience spread frequently may be cause that the African historians succeed effectively to record it contentedly to show that they are victims of the inferiority that is caused by the racist view besides, it seen very clear that the racist and slavery experience doesn’t existed in all its kinds, in other terms, if someone wants to practice this experience to another, deprived him from his rights he should firstly follow certain rules and to get it or he should follow other system that is not from his priority, here the slavery whom put themselves in this position. Here, the writers argue that this racism is institutionalized.

In another sense, as we know that any literature should follow universality as it is a main characteristic for the value of literature like the American, British or the European literature, whereas the African American literature or the black literature is seem as subsist

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type not as a completed ambiguous literature , simply because as we explain before because it relies to a certain historical experiences either slavery or racism.

In contract to this view , other writers are considered who are famous and grateful for the black literature who obtain a great literary achievement in African American society such as Toni Morison who gained the Nobel Prize for literature in1993, in addition to others like a lice worker, John Edgar, Maya Angelo, Gloria Naylor , Ishmael Reed, Nikki Giovanni, Charles Johnson, August Wilson , Rita Dove, Ernest j. Gaines and Sherely Williams who write to claim for their social cultural and literary dunned as well as writing to achieve a literary value inside the American nation .

Indeed, this black suffer from marginalization and racism more than before this view is developed today, because nowadays the society becomes more conscious about their oppression although the white baptize the blacks as being inferiors ..

Taking on other example *the souls of black folk* (1903) of W. B. Dubois who creates a new meaning of conscious which called “ a double consciousness” , here, the author portrays two kinds of culture, the British and the African and its effect on the black identity .the black writing is criticized as it is adopted the vernacular English of the black giving the superiority to the English language in other terms ,that the black language contains a grammatical Mistakes, of course , this view contentedly exaggerated from critic's points of views just to show the weakness of black and their inferiority , so this is an attempt to criticize the black language too. (ibid, p 359-365)

Moreover, concerning this literary criticism in the era of the black Art movement is seen as the era of deconstruction ,because the negative way of interpreting this view , as it portrays the black community's marginalized view and how they are abused form the American nation and getting marginalized from the writers American literature too. here , insofar it said that the black authors write their experience just for attracting the other

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societies as to they are seen as victims. Whereas this is not the truth, in the context the writer argues his idea as: “To control the critical scene” emerged “just when the literature of people of color ... began to move to the center’.” ( p 365)

In another context, when white critic ignore deliberately to criticize the black under the notion of that they are deconstructed and preferring to not engaging or discussing with the blacks , the idea of ignoring is seen as a kind of denying what the blacks improve in this sense Louis Gates J r. argues, : “ Any tool that enable the critics to explain the complex workings of the language of a text is an appreciate tool . For it is language, the black language of black texts, that expresses the distinctive quality of our literary tradition”. (p 365) In the other words, he improves that the black writers don't care about the white society and they contentedly want to separate themselves from the other communities perhaps because their strange language white is a distinct from the others whereas it is not fair to blame anyone for their separation.

The black literature from the point is of view of Gate that refers from 1960s from the beginning of idea of separatism, uniqueness or distinctiveness which is debated frequently by the European American literature, but on the other side this view is described positively by the European American literature, he looks that the distinguishing of the black literature may refer to their cultural background in which that the Africans American community having a distinct way of living specific , a specific culture, roots tradition and storytelling , like folklore, jazz blues, spirituality and the other sermonic rituals that lead spreading and developing the African American literature to reach effectively the European American literature .

other views debate this literature work in constrictive way, since it records some historical experience so it is obvious for everyone as its themes are common thus that there is no useful achievements in this literature scene it doesn't create any new thing it about

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portraying the historical experience and cultural sides which are obviously founded in each history, there is no diversities on subjects as it should be.

Concerning this view, the African folklorists engage to create a full understand of the last view about the black literature to create a new idea and correcting misunderstanding about views as it is an effect events that come from storytelling and tales by the African Americans and their difficult experience that they live in welfare so this is a logical result to a difficult history or it is a full description that portray the African American day life. In the meantime time this racist views is again is ignored by the white the writer, here gives he point of view from the perspective of white:

“About discrimination ...ethnic jokes, ridicule in front of the others, patronizing, [and] rudeness”. In other words, they're accused of seeing racism where it doesn't exist when ,in fact, it does exist, but the white people exhibiting or witnessing it aren't able or don't choose to see it as racism . As Banks observes, when you are told by your coworker that he doesn't think of you as black, you know that he is trying to say something positive , that he intends to tell you what your humanity matters to him , not your race . The underlying premise of such a statement, however, is that to be black is to be less than human. Then, of course, there's a the difficulty of always wondering of the white person who gave you a mean look or said something rude to you was being racist or was just having a bad day. The emotional stress of trying to cope with being the target of everyday racism can damage the psychological and physical health of people of color because the effects of every day racism are cumulative: “[O] ne event triggers memories of

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other, similar incidents'' . (p 370-371) This passage is pertinent to the white ignorance of the African American's racist idea and full denying of their suffusing, oppression, thus writer describes different points of view of racism topic from different perspectives.

( p 359-371)

It is reasonable that the majority of the critics are again agree to view that the black literature starting by the equality of theme that refers mainly to the history and society in which it reflects the African Americans' s reality and lives, such as : recording the past, describing the horrible image of the Middle Passage, depicting the experience of slavery by describing the series toward liberation and freedom from the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance till the reconstruction era, in addition to the role of culture traditions the consciousness racism sexism and all kinds of marginalization and oppression, all these theme are described as exclusive themes which are portrayed frequently by the African American writers.

Generally, the African American writers adopt those themes in purpose of correct the misunderstanding and the stereotype of the African Americans, by trying to separate their history from the American nation with portraying their experience by through their writings using their literary traditions either orally or by blues, jazz, rap music or adopting other sermonic ritual in a written way as it is seen this literature.

Indeed, it is a distinct literature which tends to improve their culture and their tradition by to recording the historical stories in purpose of keeping, reserving and continuing their heritage and history, as what Henry Luis Gates J r. In his work *The Signifying Monkey* in addition to *Blue* and *Ideology* and *Afro-American Literature* by Houston A. Baker, those works are put inside criticism as they record the historical experiences and some folk's characteristics.

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Whereas , Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison began to defend on their literature trying to breaking down the issue of racism in his work *Native Son* (1940) ,*The black boy* (1945). In another hand, Ralph Ellison in his work *The Invisible Man* (1952), he explores different narrative subjects and themes which tend to be a metaphorical and with ambiguous and a complex language on portraying this character's experiences.

Besides, Baker also adopts a similar view in which he improves that African American literature again debates the common themes that relate to blue 's culture whether it is a double or a material themes .of Course, this major themes are seen for instance on the work of Frederick Douglass as the life of *Olaudah Equiano , or Gustavo Vassa , the African , Written by Himself, Narrative of The Life of Frederick Douglass* and *An American Slave* . In addition to the work of Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in The Life of a Live Girl*. He clarifies that those works present their experience , loss and spiritually as it is a kind of economic oppression that founded because of and Blues as he describes this idea in this lines : “ When personæ , protagonists, autobiographical narrators, or literary critics successfully negotiate , an obdurate ‘ economics of slavery’ and a achieve a resonate, improvisational expressive dignity ”.( p388)

The black woman writing or the gender role is put away of the discussion, because it construct a great deals in the literary achievements but After a period of conflicts and debates it is criticized as we discussed before that it deals with different themes such as sexism ,racism, classism, exploitation ignorance . however today it achieve a great deal and success to challenge the of marginalization in this contest Helen Washington describes this success:

“ [O] ne of the main preoccupation of the black women writer has been the black women herself-her aspiration her conflicts , her relationship to her men and her children , her creativity” , her the

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writer improves the success of the black woman thought she is criticized. (p389)

It is discussed before than the black women writing present different themes which as violence, sexism, exploitation and victimization all those theme are seen with different perspectives, in this sense Hellen Washington reacts that there is three types of a black women suspended on the views of Alice walker, she explains that there is a three different kinds of black women a 'suspended' who is considered as a victim of both man and society as it appears in the works Nannie in Zola Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1970) and Pauline Breedlove which appears on *The Bluest Eyes* of Toni Morrison (1970), the other type is the 'assimilated' woman " which shows her suffering from the psychological violence of the white society and their ignorance, the last one is 'the emergent women' is about the ambitious woman who insist to struggle to gain more power from escaping from oppression, here, thus type appears in the of Alice walker *Meridian* (1976). again Janie in *Their Eyes Were Washing God*, this later work doesn't occur the historical experience, whereas some critics in this context prefer to add a new type of the black women called the 'liberated' woman which presents the women of the present that has the ability to engage with all situation, she is confident, powerful and more liberated, this later is shown again with Shug Avery in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) in the addition to Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977). Hence, all this writing is about portraying the struggle of women inside the society. (p 391)

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### Conclusion

African American literature emergence 's starts firstly by the recording of the historical experiences , those kinds of experiences that we have discussed in the last chapter are given a huge attention to some of critics who are definitely disagree with the way in which the theme are portrayed by the African American writers .

although some critics continue to grapple the black authors for their exploiting their history to gain a political and social achievement from the American nation, others refer that writing as that the blacks want to separate themselves from the white society, whereas others describe this literature as it lacks to the universalist value that make their literature sub subtype because of the common themes that are discussed frequently by the African American writers but those historical experiences are the main factors that lead strongly to the development of the African American literature.

# **General Conclusion**

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### General conclusion

Throughout the whole dissertation the African American historical experiences are portrayed strictly during the contemporary age in the American Society , those experiences inspired some black writers to depict their reality in the American community in the same time they show that they are equal of the American and European writers. In the other hand this is certainty, a period of history in which the human kind struggle to gain social equality omitting the idea of the skin color.

Among the many themes, African American authors choose to write strongly on their historical background using a very artistic way by adopting oppression marginalization, slavery and racist attitudes to describe and account their lives.

Actually African American literature differs from other literature simply because it deals with a distinct community that has its own culture and its literary tradition such as storytelling, blues, jazz, gospel, rap, and spirituality. The African American writers succeed to accounting the experience of slavery of the black families exploring the real suffering inside a diverse society notably the American society.

The black literature during the contemporary age reaches its high point during the Harlem Renaissance era in 1920 in which the works during this period gives a great development to African American literature especially by the writing of Hughes Jonson and Neal Zola Huston.

In the other side, the black art movement creates a crucial effect in the period between 1940s and 1970s, the black writers, and here; open debates to discuss about segregation and racism such as the works of Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin and Gwendolyn. Describing the suffering of the African Americans community and rejecting the integration idea .This era is followed by the reconstruction era that plays in important era of rising the consciousness and self decision of the African American people.

## General conclusion

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The significance of the black literature appears also in the black feminist writers during 1970s that choose to write about sexism, racism and the violence of male-female and their effects on the psychological state of the black women.

Since the African American literature is criticized a lot as we have described in the last chapter as it is a literature of, backward and inferiority from one hand , and they argued that the literature of the black tends to deal deliberately on historical social themes a separated society that reflect their realities .

Accordingly, the African American authors succeeded effectively to convey their message to the world, using their writing as weapon their taking different themes to give their voice to the oppressed blacks as a result they make their literature one of the most useful tools in social change for most of mankind's history in which it becomes today a significant part in the American literature.

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