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## Investigation of Racial Discrimination in Toni Morrison's *Sula*

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### Abstract

This paper talks about the theme of racial discrimination in black women in Toni Morrison's *Sula*. The majority of the black characters in *Sula* have been taught to despise their situation in life, to loathe their race and in some cases, to despise one another for being black. Death does not put a stop to racial discrimination. *Sula's* burial in a segregated cemetery in a segregated town alludes to the enduring nature of racism. Morrison successfully captures the dignity and sense of community of the African Americans in *Sula* while also highlighting the passive, demeaning and foolish influence of racist America on them. Helene's experience on the train shows that racial discrimination does not always result in a sense of belonging or shared experience. In the novel, Morrison conjures up an extraordinary world. Therefore, complicated themes of the African American community, the disparity between men and women and racism are all present in her writings.

**Keywords:** Racism, Discrimination, Black Community, Unaware, Relationship.

### Introduction

Toni Morrison, one of the most well-known African American female authors of the 20th century, has made an effort to illuminate racial discrimination through the lens of her made-up world. Morrison, a woman of African American descent, courageously exhibits African American feminist consciousness in her artistic work by vehemently expressing her feminist ideologies. The way Toni Morrison arranges the narrative discourse of black awareness in *Sula* is masterful. In relation to how it interacts with the other, it offers a sophisticated account of how the self might become problematic. As a result of its continual struggle with the other, the self continues to learn new truths that have an effect on its consciousness. It's important to comprehend how race and racism function in *Sula*. The majority of the black characters in the novel have been taught to despise their situation in life, to loathe their race and in some cases, to despise one another for being black. Morrison examines how a group aspires for progress in a society that has been designed to make this change impossible in *Sula*, a novel on the African-American experience in the 20th century. This theme is pertinent to readers of all races.

Toni Morrison examines the significance of female friendship in the

creation of personal identity in Sula. Sula, a black woman, is the subject of the narrative. Morrison uses contrast to highlight Sula's individuality. Sula is assertive, while Nel is reserved. Sula uses her own methods to distinguish herself from other members of the community and to demonstrate how special she is. For instance, racial discrimination is present in this novel. The situations from the novel, such as when the conductor calls Helene, Nel's mother, a 'bitch' and 'gal',

"Her glance moved beyond the white man's face to the passengers seated behind him four or five black faces were watching, two belonging to soldiers still in their shit-colored uniforms and peaked caps. She saw their closed faces, their locked eyes, and turned for compassion to the grey eyes of conductor." (Sula, 19)

Helene's experience on the train shows that racial discrimination does not always result in a sense of belonging or shared experience. The black soldiers are unable or unwilling to assist her in getting out of the predicament with the conductor. This serves as a reminder to repress the impulse to equate all members of a race without taking into consideration their distinctions and differences. Another occurrence during Sula's childhood involves Irish guys calling Nel and Sula 'pig meat', which implies that they are not fair, attractive and have dark skin tones. Sula travels to America for higher education and returns dressed elegantly and intelligently. After a few years, Sula visits the most

significant cities and social hubs in the USA. When she discovers that the guys there are not good, she decides to go home since, no matter where she goes, the men there always have the same issues and leave her feeling empty. Women struggled to find a partner who would treat them like equals. Although female friendships are frequently disregarded, she eventually realizes that it is impossible to have a friendship with a man, no matter how hard she tries. This instance demonstrates that despite the fact that they struggle against white people, they were still subjected to racial oppression and denied the right to self-identification.

The second incident involves Helene trying to instill traditional values and rules in her daughter, demonstrating how African American families rigorously adhere to and uphold their traditions; these are Morrison's epic themes.

"He would have left him there but noticed that it was a child, not an old black man, as it first appeared" (Sula, 86)

These lines claim that a young boy by the name of Chicken Little from the Sula neighborhood, who spent every day with them, once sneakily floated a boat to play. The boy suddenly died after slipping out of Sula's finger. The discrimination of the bargeman shows a blatant contempt for mankind. Chicken would have been left in the river to rot if he wasn't a young child. His family was unaware of his whereabouts or what transpired to him.

"Just over there was the colored part of the cemetery. She went in. Sula was buried there" (Sula, 59)

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Death does not put a stop to racial discrimination. Sula's burial in a segregated cemetery in a segregated town alludes to the enduring nature of racism. Nel and the neighborhood became aware of Sula's presence after her death since she tried to defy social norms and spread moral rectitude through that. Nel, a close friend of Sula's, awakens and alters her perspective in order to define herself as a woman and forge their own identity. Sula attempts to combat racism and clear a path for her people throughout the entire novel.

Sula tells the story of Sula and Nel, two best friends who had quite different upbringings but remained close. The relationships formed between Sula and Nel are evidence of and relevant to this desire for social and gender identity in both of them. Nel is cautious and reliable, whereas Sula is sentimental and adventurous. Sula becomes a free woman, whilst Nel becomes a slave to racism. Nel reflects a level of womanhood that is based on the status of working-class black males in the community rather than the ideal southern lady ideal. Nel's community views this role as positive, whereas Sula is viewed as wicked. Because when Sula persists on making herself, she not only rejects the role but also transcends any caste classification for women. She has no interest in being attractive or having children. She keeps herself outside of society's definitions of race and class. The problem of their life and its resolution were found by Nel and Sula. African American women must learn to rely on themselves if they are to overcome their oppression. Morrison explains how

Sula had held to Nel as the thing that was the closest to both another and a self, only to learn that they weren't exactly the same. Due to their understanding that their lives as black women are limited by their community and by society at large, Nel and Sula are drawn to one another.

Nel's and Sula's homes are being contrasted by Morrison. The social norms that establish the traditional definition of family bind Nel's home. Sula's family is structured differently than most families. She resides in a female-run multigenerational family. Sula's home is dynamic, energetic and prone to change, in contrast to Nel's rigid and oppressive home. The long-term inhabitants of her home are complemented by a steady supply of boarders. The physical structure of the dwellings itself shows the distinctions between them. Nel's home is consistently tidy and well-maintained, whereas Sula's home is enormous and disorganized because Eva has built more rooms over time. The houses represent the differing prospective for expansion and transform in the girl's families. Eva experiences racism and humiliation, much like the other residents of the Bottom. Eva is married to a boy whose name denotes his responsibility and maturity, and the two of them have three children. One of them is Hannah, Sula's mother, Pearl and their son is Ralph, also known as Plum. Because she is a black woman, Eva endures great suffering and lacks employment opportunities. She so relies on neighborhood assistance to provide for the children needs. However, they are

just as poor as she is and she is aware that she cannot rely on them indefinitely. Eva once left her kids in the care of a neighbor. She promised to return in a short while, but it has been eighteen months since she last visited. She comes back with ten thousand dollars and one leg.

Toni Morrison portrays the deplorable circumstances that black people faced in the 1920s. Morrison successfully captures the dignity and sense of community of the African Americans in *Sula* while also highlighting the passive, demeaning and foolish influence of racist America on them. This ultimately serves to highlight the foolishness of racism.

#### Conclusion

Thus, it can be concluded that Morrison, an African American woman who has seen much suffering at the hands of white people, is on a quest for identity. Morrison has vividly described the anguish of racial discrimination in white-dominated American society since she is a black feminist and has first-hand experience with it. In her novel *Sula*, Toni Morrison explores the journey of the female lead, *Sula*, as she attempts to forge her own identity and come to terms with her status as a black woman. Morrison exemplifies the struggles faced by African women. Morrison exemplifies the challenges black women encounter when attempting to explore many facets of their selves. In the novel, Morrison conjures up an extraordinary world. Therefore, complicated themes of the African American community, the disparity between men and women and racism are all present in her writings. The

pride of the black community was Morrison, who served as its ambassador. *Sula* is also mistreated by the family, notably by her mother, who denies that she even exists. The final is her friend Nel, who, although having shared many priceless memories in the past, prefers her husband above her. White boys treat Nel unfairly, but *Sula* defends her by cutting her own finger. Those facets influence her apparition to see that there is dual domination within the society racial discrimination and patriarchy.

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