

# The Other Side to the Genre of Resistance: Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

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## Abstract

This work is set out to analyse the variant of resistance as projected in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. The discourse is developed from an African American critical perspective towards examining the different ways in which resistance is represented in other situations and in this work. The argument in the first part is that to competently illustrate resistance in *Beloved*, it is imperative to scrutinize the physical, psychological, socio-cultural and even supernatural dimensions to the concept. It was deduced that resistance could be violent, civil, verbal, psychological and supernatural. Secondly, resistance as generic category is objectively represented when its limitations are outlined. This brought to the exploration of the efficiency of the various genres of resistance in Morrison's *Beloved*. So, while the psychological, civil and verbal aspects of resistance are presented as efficient, the violent forms of resistance are presented as auto-destructive, hence inadequate for the liberation of the oppressed.

**Keywords:** Resistance, Oppression, Violence, Slavery, Culture, Freedom

## Introduction

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* explores the African American era of slavery to reveal that the quest for power and the penchant to subdue a weaker group of people is not exclusive to racists. Rather, it is an innate characteristic of man; race notwithstanding. It is as a result of this that Morrison goes beyond the atrocities of racism to explore the subjugation of black women by black men (gender), and the subjugation of poor blacks by rich ones (class) within the black community. Resistance thereby is inevitable as a counter-reaction to oppression. The purpose of this paper thereby is to examine resistance as an inevitable reaction to hegemony in *Beloved*. In order to enhance this study, the following question is asked; "what are the different genres of resistance in *Beloved* and how efficient are they?" This study thereby posits that resistance

can only be properly contextualised after exploring the genres that lie in the physical, socio-cultural, psychological and supernatural perspectives. African American Criticism, being an embodiment of the above concepts becomes a cogent praxis for the exploration of the different genres of resistance and their efficacies. Through the African American critical perspective of internalization, institutionalization and black culture (music and religion), resistance could be violent, civil, supernatural, psychological and verbal. However, resistance is to be seen as deficient at some points, for some forms of resistance further destroy the victims and their society.

Iyunolu Osagie reviews *Beloved* in "Is Morrison also Among the Prophets? Psychoanalytic strategies in *Beloved*-Toni Morrison" and states that *Beloved* reawakens painful experiences, what Osagie calls "buried stimuli" of the African American slaves of the past (423). Due to Morrison's fascination with historical events, she deconstructs and constructs a famous incident in 1855. She uses real slave stories to construct a reinvented slave experience giving *Beloved* a perfect blend. As Osagie puts it, uses both the Western and African American vision to give a different facet to slavery, a facet different from the former stereotype image of slavery. Moreover, the appearance and disappearance of ghosts and shadows is a clear indication that Morrison marks out to indicate that, "There is more than meets the eye in the construction of history" (424). Osagie explains that Morrison's *Beloved* is a mixture of African and Western psychoanalysis. Western psychoanalysis is seen in Freudians Oedipus complex, whereas the African psychoanalysis is reflected through concepts such as "native, the supernatural realm, reincarnation, and retribution". He further explains that African psychological trauma is often reflected through historical, political and social facts and the resistance is carried out through reinvention of history, through oral tradition, dancing and exorcism.

Nancy Jesser in "Violence, home and community in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" presents the mindset and memories of characters to define their personalities. Their memories express their wishes, desires and emotions (325). Jesser explains that the characters are presented in stages of transformation. Their weaknesses come in the beginning, then they gradually metamorphose. She illustrates this with the setting 124 Bluestone, which is a jovial and exciting sight where people came together in harmony. This place is transformed drastically into a spooky sight after Sethe murders her daughter. Before this incident, Sethe lived at Sweet Home as a slave. The name Sweet Home did not necessarily imply that the place was conducive or

homely, for Sethe failed to make the place her home despite her attempts to put in some decorations that could personalize the environment. The reader sees two major facets of Sweet Home. Sweet Home ruled by the Ganners, and later by School Teacher. Though each ruler had his method, they were all carrying out chattel slavery, and Ganner's attempt to make the place a utopia does not work out, for the place remains a living hell for the slaves.

Ganner uses a softer ruling system giving the slaves some time for themselves, and some respect. He is carrying out the leadership of a false community, for the members of this community lack freedom. Better still; the rules of the community do not apply equally to everyone. Ganner is said to be softer because he has a merchandise spirit. To get better products and a prosperous plantation one needs to give the slaves better treatment. He is proud of his healthy-looking slaves like a farmer would be proud of healthy products from his farm. His permitting them to carry out some decisions does not change the fact that he is in charge, he gives them names as it suits him, owns them. Jester thereby reveals that Ganner and the school teacher are the same. The only difference is at the level of the softness of the tones. However, she emphasises that the shift in administration matters in the understanding of how Sweet Home functions.

As a slave, Sethe struggles to fit into the system. She tries to put away the bad aspects of slavery to focus on the good ones. Consequently, she makes Mrs Ganner's kitchen more comfortable, with little decorations so it could be homely. Yet, when School Teacher comes up, he makes it clear to all the slaves that Sweet Home is not their home, but they fit in as properties. It is this administrative approach that awakens the slaves and brings them to reality. Therefore, Paul D and Sethe decide that they have to escape and look in search of a proper home. Paul D understood that it needed freedom to have a home. It is out of Sweet Home that Sethe realizes that she could love her children. The fact that they are not owned by someone else but herself gives her a real sense of freedom. Despite her escape from Sweet Home, she continually refers to it. This to Jester is proof that the new community is constantly haunted by the old one.

Unlike the above-mentioned works, this study explores different genres of resistance. Resistance stretches through a variety of meaning most of which tie to this study. Resistance to Gramsci is a counter-hegemonic reaction (*Krieger64*). This implies that resistance is an inevitable response to oppression; it is the struggle to overcome, push back, or stop oppression. In other words, resistance is the refusal to accommodate or accept imposed

ideas.

This study examines resistance using the African American Criticism. This theory came up in the 20th century, developed by the Black Art movement and emerging talented African American writers such as Henry Louis Gates, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, Angelina Grinbla and Marina Bauner. This form of criticism evolved alongside Post-Colonial Criticism and both tend to have some similarities as they are based on “the experience and literary production of people whose history is characterized by extreme political, social and psychological oppression” (Tyson 363). That is to say, these theories study the lives of people whose history is characterized by intense subjugation. Lois Tyson explains that African American Criticism is all about “...a number of recurring historical and sociological themes, all of which reflect the politics—realities of political, social and economic power of black American experience” (385). African American criticism focuses on a wide range of black experiences -their songs, myths, folklore, language (the broken African American English) and above all their history (363). These experiences enrich American fiction and African American criticism even more towards the study of resistance.

### **Non-Violent/Civil Resistance**

Institutionalized racism is an organized form of racism that is legally implemented in the different societal institutions and services such as schools, train stations, bus stops and hospitals. This form of racism was prominent during and after the abolition of slavery and right up to the period of the fight for civil rights by African Americans (Tyson 361). To this resistance was inevitable from the oppressed. Non-violent resistance is commonly represented in *Beloved*. Non-violent resistance is synonymous with civil resistance as Adam Roberts puts it;

Civil Resistance is a type of political action that relies on the use of non-violent methods. It is largely synonymous with certain other terms, including 'non-violent action', 'non-violent resistance' and 'people power'. It involves a range of widespread and sustained activities that challenge a particular power, force, policy or regime – hence the term 'resistance'. The adjective 'civil' in this context denotes that which pertains to a citizen or society, implying that a movement's goals are 'civil' in the sense of being widely shared in a society; and it denotes that the action concerned is non-military or non-violent in character. (1).

Non-violent resistance during the slave era is seen in the non-violent activities carried out to get freedom like a constant effort to flee from slavery. Slave owners had the right to free their slaves if they did extra hours of work. Halle resorts to this opportunity. He does extra work to buy his mother's freedom. Mr Garner, being a man of his words ends up granting the old Baby Suggs freedom; and she leaves for the North, to Cincinnati. In the absence of the possibility to buy one's freedom, many tried to illegally flee from their masters as seen in *Beloved*.

First, Sethe's mother who is brought from Africa, flees and leaves Sethe behind. Under School Teacher's reign, the slaves decide to run and it is Sixo and Paul D who take the first step. Unfortunately, School Teacher and his nephews get them, and Sixo is killed; while Paul D is brought back to Sweet Home. This does not hinder Sethe's determination to escape. First, she sends away her two boys and her suckling baby to join her mother-in-law then she, in turn, escapes though she is pregnant. In her situation, she runs out into the woods, and it takes a white ex-indentured servant, Amy Denver, to help her give birth. Morrison unfolds the tenacity and the strength she demonstrates when she escapes from Sweet Home, where she was maltreated and tortured like a beast, though pregnant. It takes an inhumane potency to sustain the discomforts of pregnancy and childbearing in the wild and still make it to Cincinnati alive. Her wounds do not stop her from escaping. Paul D endures a similarly horrific experience while escaping the chain gang he is sold to in Alfred, Georgia. On a rainy day, they find themselves abandoned in the crumbling cage. As one man they break out of the cage and make their way to the dark rainy forests. In the dark woods, they finally find a means of getting rid of the chains.

Freedom quests were not the only non-violent forms of resistance. Sixo is a resistant character who uses crafty means of retaliating. He steals to make up for all they are deprived of. James H. Sweet posits that:

Another common form of slave resistance was theft. Slaves pilfered fruits, vegetables, livestock, tobacco, liquor, and money from their masters. The theft of foodstuffs was especially common and was justified on several grounds. First, slave rations were often woefully inadequate in providing the nutrition and calories necessary to support the daily exertions of plantation labour. Hungry slaves reasoned that their master's abundance should be shared with those who produced it. (1).

Blacks resist by depriving their masters of their properties. They steal to compensate for all they lack. They steal to eat, for they are hardly well fed and their bodies can barely support the coarse situations and works they are exposed to. Stealing therefore is not only aimed at providing their needs but also as a way of declaring their right to all their masters own. They find it unjust toil in exchange for nothing while their masters enjoy the wealth gotten off the sweat of their brows.

Lovalerie King calls Sixo “an African Ideal of manhood” (307-308). He dances and thinks of ways to escape Sweet Home. He steals a pig and when the Schoolteacher questions him, he explains that the pig he had eaten will only make him a better and healthier slave whose work will be even more effective. He is witty and smart, qualities not expected in a slave. Blacks, considered a dimwitted race, had as primary and sole function to work and take orders. They are not expected to reason nor have an opinion. His first conflict, which involves the stolen pig, gets him severely whipped; the second conflict which comes about his attempt to escape gets him killed. Schoolteacher is quick to murder him for he knows deep within that Sixo will never grow into a submissive slave.

### **Psychological and Verbal Resistance**

Psychological resistance pulls its strength from the refusal to internalize the mindset of the oppressors. Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* demonstrates this aspect of internalized racism, through Pecola Breedlove and her obsession with having blue eyes. Some blacks saw themselves as naturally inferior to whites and bore no shame in subduing and denigrating themselves before whites. Whites often took advantage of such situations. Bearing very dark skin, that symbolically reveals his unshakable identity; Sixo is known for resisting white rule. Psychologically, he does not internalize racist notions on slavery. He builds his ego, by secretly daring to date a woman, what was thought to be white privileges only. Dating a woman attests to his surmounting white racial prejudice.

Though escapism is a hazardous form of resistance, Paul D chooses psychological escapism to manage his trauma. He psychologically confides in a tobacco tin. In the same tin, he locks up every emotional feeling that could break him. Refusing to love anyone deeply, he disapproves of Sethe's attachment to Denver. His target is preserving the heart from ruptures that come with losing love ones. Having gone through the trauma of being separated from his loved ones during slavery, he rearranges his emotions to

love with reserve. The African American culture is a powerful psychological form of resistance expressed through songs, Black English and Afro-Christian sermons. While still in chains, Paul D and the other prisoners sang songs as a means of recollecting and retaining memories which are vital in the reassertion of their identities as seen below:

With a sledgehammer in his hands and Hi Man`s lead, the men got through. They sang it out and beat it up, garbling the words so they could not be understood; tricking the words so their syllables yielded up other meanings. They sang women they knew; children they had been; the animals they had tamed themselves or seen others tame. They sang of bosses and masters and misses; of mules and dogs and shamelessness of life. They sang lovingly of graveyards and sisters long gone. Of pork in the woods; meal in the pan; fish on the line; cane, rain and rocking chairs...Singing love songs to Mr Death, they smashed his head. More than the rest, they killed the flirt whom folks called Life for leading them on. Making them think the next sunrise will be worth it. (128).

Slaves mended broken identities with songs. These songs are sung in a language that is codified so the information remains exclusively theirs. These songs represent the black identity as it talks of blacks and their lives; their experiences and origins. It is what constructs a good part of African American history and culture.

Through the above passage, the psychological state of these slaves is revealed. First, they sing about family issues when they talk of the women they have known and their childhood. Pathos is brought out as the same treatment they consider good for animals is given them on the fields. In other words, the aspect of taming an animal is special to them as it is an opportunity to play the role of the master and not a servant, or slave. When taming an animal, they exert the authority they long to have, the authority whites have deprived them of.

From family, they move to animals, after which they move to their bosses and masters and mistresses who represent the hierarchy. In the first section of the sentence, the words “bosses”, “masters” and “misses” represent the oppressors and in the second section of the sentence, we have “mules” and “dogs” which represent black people. Mules, it should be noted, are a crossbreed of horses and donkeys. They cannot reproduce. Their only

function is carrying out perilous duties on the farm such as transporting very heavy objects across distant places. Dogs on the other hand are there to serve man, guard cattle and protect the house from unwanted strangers. Slaves have all those roles to play. Those animals reflect the exploitation of black people and the dehumanization of the black race. To this effect, they accuse nature of letting this happen when they sing of “the shamelessness of life”. Knowing that one did not choose the race to be born into, they accuse life of letting it happen that they should be victims of fate.

Moreover, they move directly from their accusations to death. They sing about graveyards, evoking the imagery of death and relating it to their sisters long gone. The usage of the term sisters does not only apply to the female race but also to all those who could not withstand the treatment they are given. The expression “long gone” symbolizes the pain they feel as they miss their loved ones who have passed away. After singing about death, they talk of a series of objects and subjects that do not relate. The expression of their trauma is revealed in this statement. Their confusion and loss of identity, their unstable memory of the past and the present they are trying to escape are reflected in that statement.

To crown it all, they go as far as using their song as a weapon against Death. With the songs they conquer death and this relieves them of their fears. It also reveals that they are giving up life, for they curse life and the waking up of the sun that pretends to bring changes and hope in their monotonous lives of slavery. Life is referred to as “flirt”, to show its unreliability, infidelity and deceitful nature. These songs have the desired effects on slaves, for it is said: “Eighty-six days and done. Life was dead. Paul D beat her butt all day every day till there was no whimper in her” (129). These songs represent the origin of Jazz and Blues, African American rhythms that express traumatic experiences and tell stories of the past and present. These songs are used to pass out messages but also to build their identity as Africans of origin. The outward flow of emotions in songs by these slaves reveals their will to conserve the little of what is left of their disappearing identity. The expressive nature of their songs unfolds a series of emotions such as pain, regrets, and hopelessness; all of which characterize their individual and collective experiences.

Morrison was fond of her parents' tales. These tales served as a means of entertaining the family but also overcoming the tense atmosphere that poverty and frustration could generate. They were spiced with myths, the supernatural, songs and religion. From this oral tradition, she got her

inspiration for the incredibly rich tales seen in her fiction. Morrison's parents also were musicians and this got Morrison interested in music as revealed in her novel *Jazz*. George and Ramah Wofford instilled in their children the importance of culture, their past and self-respect through their tales. (Kubitscheck 1-2)

Baby Suggs is a spiritual character through whom another vital form of resistance is revealed. After Baby Suggs' freedom is bought, she moves up North with the Bodwins, a white family. Before she leaves, however, she begins by reclaiming her identity, by changing her name. When sold to Mr Garner, it is written Jenny Whitlow on the bill of sales presented to Mr Garner. However, she reclaims her name which is 'Suggs' and the name her husband called her 'Baby'; this gave the name Baby Suggs. Rejecting names given by slave masters was a common phenomenon to demonstrate self-ownership. Zechariah in Morrison's *Paradise* demonstrates resistance by adopting the name, Morgan. Formally called Coffee, adopts the name Morgan because none of Haven's people had worked under a white called Morgan (*Paradise*192). He aims to wipe away any past identification with their white masters. By adopting the name Morgan, he creates or redefines his own identity and that of his generation; for his sons grow to adopt the name. Naming oneself is a primary step to psychological liberation for Baby Suggs. When given freedom Baby Suggs discovers the joy of owning her hands and she feels her heartbeat for the first time.

Culture plays a vital role in resistance, especially through The Clearing. It is an assembly for ex-slaves and Baby Suggs is at its origin. There, ex-slaves met and laughed together, wept together and sang. Baby Suggs preached and made promises of freedom and peace. This place served as an escape from reality. The place provided spiritual satisfaction and even Sethe is caught up in this web. She believes she has been healed at the clearing and wishes to pass over this healing to Paul D. It is at the rock of Baby Suggs in the Clearing that Denver rescues Sethe from the supernatural fingers that strangled her. The Clearing offered a rediscovery of the self, what Baby Suggs preaches.

“Here”, she said, “in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes; they'd just as soon pick em out. No more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder they flay it. And O my people they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! Love

them. Raise them up and kiss them. Touch others with them, pat them together, stroke them on your face 'cause they don't love that either. You got to love it, you! And no, they ain't in love with your mouth. Yonder, out there, they will see it broken and break it again. (Beloved, 103-4).

Baby Suggs' sermons inspire love but most importantly love for one's self. In the Clearing, in the woods, she preaches before black women, children and men. She teaches them to love one another despite the nasty image whites give them. "Flesh" is personified to give life. The flesh is said to weep and laugh and dance. She uses the term "flesh" to show the demolition of the black identity. She makes them understand that their bodies, which they regard as simple flesh, is precious for out of it emerges emotions. Being able to produce emotions thereby implies that they are humans and should assert that reality. She calls on them to celebrate their bodies, to love every part of them, especially because whites hate it. Because whites cannot love them, they have to love themselves. If whites cannot value their black bodies, then they have to learn how to value them.

### **Resistance in the Supernatural**

Gothicism is a major theme that runs across a good number of Morrison's works, through Magic Realism. In other words, Morrison's works are highly characterised by inexplicable events that transcend the normal human. While some of these metaphysical events are without harm, as in *Paradise*, others bring along the spirit of vengeance as seen in *Beloved*. They range from ghosts to pure reflections of magic, and even the resurrection of the dead. These supernatural aspects reflect a rare form of resistance in *Beloved*.

Resistance at this level is seen from two perspectives. First is that which exists between the supernatural and the physical. Morrison's works generally have the supernatural resisting the oppressing physical dimension. Morrison portrays the horrific activities of the baby ghost at 124 as some form of resistance. The whole community deserts Sethe's home and the inhabitants are terrified daily by the enraged baby ghost. Sethe's sons are petrified to the extent of escaping from the house, abandoning their family to the horrors of the ghost:

124 WAS SPITEFUL. Full of a baby's venom. The women in the house knew it and so did the children...the sons Howard and Buglar had run away by the time they were thirteen years old-as soon as merely looking in a mirror shattered it (that was

the signal for Buglar); as soon as two tiny handprints appeared in the cake (that was it for Howard). Neither boy waited to see more... (3)

The ghost is resisting. The baby's terror is described as venom, revealing the intensity to which it poisons the lives of Sethe and her family. The thirteen-year-old black boys in a racist society choose to survive out of their home. Their escape reveals the edge to which they are terrorized, for it takes a potential sense of danger for teenagers to desert their home and family to a world where they are abhorred.

Sethe plays God when she decides on the death penalty for her two-year-old daughter. The murdered baby takes upon two forms to exert vengeance: first as a ghost and later the strange grown-up young woman Beloved. She only leaves at the end when Sethe reproduces the event of her murder, but this time aiming at the supposed School Teacher. When Sethe seeks to protect Beloved like a mother should at the end instead of murdering her like she did, she redeems herself and Beloved leaves them for good. This gives an appraisal of Morrison's notion of motherhood. Kubitschek says; “—Though she (Morrison) worked hard at her editing and wrote her first novel while her sons were still pre-schoolers, Morrison is clear on making children the highest priority. —What they deserve and need, in-house, is a mother. They do not need and cannot use a writer” (6). Morrison's devotion to motherhood makes her stand out as an example for black women. Sethe fails thus when she gives in to trauma and rejects her motherly instincts, but redeems herself in the end after Beloved's revolts get her to reevaluate her priorities.

Beloved, who represents the human form of the baby ghost, is a symbol of slavery. She jeopardizes Sethe's freedom; but unlike before where whites were the slave masters, Beloved is the one in control. She paranormally possesses Sethe completely, making the other house members flee. Her representation of slavery is marked by the fact that in a struggle to revenge her death she traumatizes Sethe with a similar treatment to slavery. Beloved is the unforgettable past that haunts Sethe, reminding her of things she thought she had forgotten. Beloved symbolizes the inability of the black ex-slaves to escape the past. Just when Sethe begins to find happiness with Paul D, and Denver begins to feel integrated into the black commute, Beloved comes in with destruction, pain, trauma and memories once forgotten.

### **Violence as Auto-Destructive Resistance**

Resistance is generally a result of trauma; consequently, it is often executed without a guard. To this effect many of these attempts to resist create a boomerang effect on the individual like the black masses. They unintentionally hurt themselves physically and psychologically. In many cases it also affects the black mass by tarnishing the black reputation, creating division within the society and violence. Morrison satirizes the dying wish to reject oppression by sacrificing one's self, family or people. She puts forth more subtle forms of resistance such as solidarity, love, culture, seeking one's roots and identity; all of which build an identity that no form of oppression can destroy. During slavery, exposed forms of violent resistance were rare in America for whites had carried out all measures possible to intimidate black people. However, it is clear that, some of these rare cases were very bloody:

Motivated by religious visions of racial violence, Nat Turner organized a revolt in Virginia in August 1831. He and a close-knit group of slaves went from farm to farm killing any whites they found; in the end, fifty-five of them were found dead, mostly women and children. Turner intentionally did not try to gain support from slaves on nearby plantations before the short-lived revolt began. He had hoped that the brutality of the murders (the victims were hacked to death or decapitated) would both terrorize slave owners and gain recruits. (Hoffman, 137).

In search of a scheme that will get whites to liberate their slaves, Nat Turner is said to have gone from farm-to-farm murdering white women and children. He hoped that by terrorizing them he would get them to release the other black people. Though he is later caught and hanged alongside his companions, he successfully instills fear in whites who start considering liberating their slaves. Violence here seems inevitable in a search for freedom, especially where nonviolent forms have failed to bring forth positive results.

The most ambiguous form of resistance can be seen through Sethe murdering her daughter. When Schoolteacher finds Sethe in Cincinnati, she runs with her children to a hidden spot where she decides to kill them rather than let them be enslaved. Sethe's action is ambiguous; one understands her distress and yet wonders if she had the right to take away life. This action unveils the intensity of Sethe's trauma. Magill reveals that:

And certainly, Sethe's murder of her child can be seen as the ultimate act of resistance, embodying as it does not only a

condemnation of slavery but also an assertion of property rights and individual autonomy for Sethe. To kill the beloved child is to claim a mother's right to decide what is best for the child, a right denied to slaves in antebellum culture. Children were often sold away from parents, seen as more property. Yet Sethe claims ownership of that property in a radical act of slave revolt. (378).

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Sethe, having tasted liberty for a few weeks, decides not to let her daughter endure slavery. She would rather take away her life than let her be enslaved. She knows her children will be given the same treatment, if not worse than what she is given. The act of murdering her daughter is aimed at showing the slave masters she is the owner of her children and decides on their fate. Having seen her mother murdered by white slave masters and Baby Suggs

deprived of her children, she is decided on being the mistress of her children's destiny. This drastic act of hers also aims at terrorizing the whites as Sula did to the four Irish boys. Though free, her life is destroyed as she is dreaded by the black community. Her story is in the papers destroying further the image of black people. Psychologically, she is traumatized, so her freedom is only physical while she remains psychologically bound.

### Conclusion

Conclusively, Morrison's *Beloved* is an embodiment of oppression and even more so, various genres of resistance that range from violent, non-violent, verbal and psychological resistance. This study has illustrated resistance physically and psychologically through violence, verbal expressions, and the denial to internalize self-destructive ideas. Through African American Criticism the study has revealed that the African American culture and history play a vital role in their resistance as seen in the songs, sermons and orature. Resistance is considered to be counter-productive when it leads the blacks to assume the role of the oppressor or racist in other ways. In this way, deconstructing the longstanding myth of black innocence.

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