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# Breaking Racial Barriers: Forging Brotherhood in Mark Twain's Adventures ofHuckleberry Finn

**MlBURO, Sandrine'; Supervisor: Mr, Nganyu Dominic Nfonni**

**2011-05**
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**UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI**

**FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**



# Breaking Racial Barriers: Forging Brotherhood in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

BY

**Sandrine MIBURO**

**Supervisor:**

Mr. Nganyu Dominic Nformi

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree **"Licence en Langue et Littérature Anglaises"**

**Bujumbura, May 2011**

# DEDICATION

To my dear mother,

To my late father,

To my beloved husband, Laurent Nsengiyumva,

To my little Don Bright Nsengiyumva,

I dedicate this work.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this work is a result of the collaboration of many persons. Though we cannot list all the names here, some of them deserve to be mentioned.

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Nganyu Dominic Nformi, lecturer at the University of Burundi, who supervised this work despite his numerous academic responsibilities. His advice, corrections and comments made this work what it is now.

I am deeply thankful to all my teachers from primary school to the University of Burundi, especially those in the Department of English Language and Literature.

I also express my profound gratitude to my parents and brothers for their moral and material support. Special thanks go to the family of Protais HABONIMANA for their constant encouragement and advice all along my studies.

Last but not least, I extend my heartfelt thanks to all my classmates and friends, who helped me in a way or the other in the completion of this work. May the Almighty God continue to guide their steps.

## ABSTRACT

This work sets forth to examine the attempt at breaking racial barriers as seen through Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* Our study traces the relationship between two characters from different races, Huck, a White and Jim, a Black who forge a brotherly relation in spite of racial prejudices. This study, therefore, aims at examining the change in attitude demonstrated by Mark Twain towards slavery. The analysis carried out through this work clearly shows Mark Twain's attitude towards slavery and racial segregation. Like the author himself, Mark Twain fashions a white character who violates racial dictates by breaking racial barriers and finally becomes against the institution of slavery. This work is thus constructed on the hypothesis that racial prejudice can end if individuals show love to people from different racial backgrounds. Centred on the New Historicism approach, this work intends to display that there are always people who work consciously for the good of the oppressed groups.

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# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The history of the United States of America is characterised by great events among them slavery and racial segregation. The American continent which was discovered by Christopher Columbus in the 1500s later attracted the attention of many western countries who settled in the New World in quest of wealth. The exploitation of this land became problematic since they were in need of much labour. With the rapidly expanding plantations in the area, the need for labour to plough the land became imperative. Because the Red Indians who supplied the labour proved vulnerable to diseases, eyes and routes were turned to Africa for man power. This therefore brought about the question of slavery and slave trade in Africa. During this period, able men and women were taken as slaves from Africa to the Americas to serve as labourers on the white owned plantations.

As said above, because the aborigines refused to work for the colonisers, the latter turned to Africa to search for a strong and obedient man power. Hundreds of thousands of Blacks were deported from Africa to America in hard and inhuman conditions. The thousands of Blacks who were caught were forever separated from their families. As far as transportation was concerned, Blacks were gathered, chained and shipped to America. They were still chained all along the way to the destination. During the Middle Passage, a hard and long voyage from Africa to America which could last between five and eight weeks in water according to the weather, many captives died because of hunger, hard conditions and diseases. The dead were inhumanly thrown into water, and a rough estimation says that about sixteen percent of those who were transported died along the way.

Those who reached the New World experienced inhuman conditions of life: they worked relentlessly like machines in tobacco, cotton and sugar cane plantations without salary, shelter, enough food, rest, to name but a few. In order to fully exploit the white owned land, Blacks were whipped to prevent them from thinking about any other thing that could enhance their living conditions. They were refused the American citizenship, they could not vote; they were segregated in the white community. In case they became ill or died, their masters would go to the market and purchase others to replace them. Concerning segregation, Blacks were restricted to their own dirty and shabby quarters. Because of their race, they could not attend the same restaurants, hospitals, schools and theatres with Whites. This was done to keep Blacks in inferior position if we compare them to Whites. Those sufferings that Blacks were subjected to were mostly noticed in South America which was agrarian and proslavery. Since the North was industrialised and needed no unskilled labour, they were antislavery.

Given the establishment of such conditions, some White men realised that the treatment meted on the Blacks was cruel and unfair and that Blacks, like Whites, were human beings whose rights needed to be respected. Among them, is Mark Twain who, in his novel, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, demonstrates through the character of Huck Finn that Jim is a human being like him, reason why he helps him to run away from his last master, Uncle Silas.

In this perspective, some questions come to mind: to what extent did Blacks experience slavery? How did slavery by-and-by develop into racial issues? What are some of the means by which racial prejudices can be wiped out? Can

individual relationships lead to the end of racism? These questions among others will be answered in the course of this work.

For the sake of a better understanding, it is necessary to define some key terms which will be at the centre of our discussion. These terms are: racial, barrier and brotherhood. To begin with racial, it is an adjective from the noun race. The *Encyclopaedia Americana*, vol. 25 states that there is no very clear idea in the mind of many to what constitutes race. In this light, *The World Book Encyclopaedia* mentions that all human beings have a common ancestry, that is, all people are related to one another. It also says that many groups of people have lived apart for long periods of time, and have come to differ from one another than do members of different races. According to *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, race is a division of mankind possessing traits that are transmitted by distinct human types. And *Britannica World Language Dictionary*, vol. 2 puts that race is one of the major subdivisions of mankind, regarded as having a common origin and exhibiting a relatively constant set of physical traits. It is any group of people or any grouping of people having or assumed to have common characteristics.

Somehow, race has been a major basis of discrimination by one group against another. It is very clear in the term racism, which is, according to *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*, the assumption that psycho-cultural traits and capacities are determined by biological race and that races differ decisively from one another, which is usually coupled with a belief in the inherent superiority of particular race and its

right to domination over others. Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch view racism as a legacy of slavery. They further state that:

> The doctrine of Negro inferiority had been one of the cornerstones for the moral justification of the enslavement of Blacks propounded by the apologists for slavery, and once established, this racist belief that an insidious was of reinforcing itself. *(One kind of freedom: The Economic Consequences of Emancipation, 22*)

*The Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* defines race as a division of mankind possessing traits that are transmissible by descent and sufficient to characterise it as a distinct human type. In our study, we will use the definition of race according to *Britannica World Language Dictionary*, Vol.2 which states that race is one of the major subdivisions of mankind, regarded as having a common origin and exhibiting a relatively constant set of physical traits. It is any group of people or any grouping of people having or assumed to have common characteristics.

As far as the term barrier is concerned, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, states that it is anything immaterial that stops advance hostile or friendly that defends from attack, prevent intercourse or union, or keeps separate and apart. We judged this definition suitable for our study. To end with brotherhood, the definition from *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* which mentions that brotherhood is a friendship and understanding between people, suits this work.

As *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is recognised as one of the great American novels, it will be necessary to talk about the life of the author, Mark Twain. Pseudonym of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, Mark Twain was born on November 30, 1835 in Florida USA. In 1839 his family moved to Hannibal, Missouri, where he grew up enjoying the adventurous boyhood which he later immortalised especially in his three classics: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885). Samuel Clemens lost many of his family members such as his kid sister, Margaret, his younger brother Benjamin who became ill and died after, his father John Clemens who died of pneumonia in 1847. The worst was the death of his wife, Olivia Langdon, and his four children which left him embittered and lonely. He spent his life as a steamboat pilot and had got a pilot's licence eventually in 1859. He was also one of the staff of the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise and a writer. After six years as a miner, newspaper reporter, and lecturer in California, Nevada and Hawaii, Mark Twain went east in 1866, responding to a call to lecturer of law, that is, humorous. Events in American history such as the civil war, the gold Rush, and moving west became important themes for Twain. While working for the Nevada Territorial Enterprise, Sam first wrote under his pen name Mark Twain.

To become so famous, Mark Twain began with the publication in 1865 of *Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog*, a comic Western tale that he heard in a mining camp not far from his cabin on Jackass Hill in the California gold country. When he was twenty-five years old he published *The notorious Jumping Frog of Caleveras Country*. Mark Twain heard that story in the western mining camp where he had gone.

Mark Twain wrote his masterpiece, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, at a time the light-hearted qualities of his earlier days were in balance with his later scepticism, and the novel has come to be recognised as one of the great works of American literature. He died in 1910 at the age of seventy-five in Connecticut.

This work sets forth to examine the attempt at breaking racial barriers as seen through Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* To succeed in this endeavour, we intend to trace the relationship between two characters from different races. These forge a brotherly relationship in spite of racial prejudices. This study, therefore, aims at examining the change in attitude demonstrated by Mark Twain towards slavery. We will equally explore and expose some aspects of racism which marked the painful experience of Blacks in America. This work, therefore, examines the painful and sorrowful conditions of Negroes during the period of slavery. The study will focus on Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, though references will be drawn from other critical sources.

This work is written on the hypothesis that racial prejudice can end if individuals show love to people from different racial backgrounds. The study concludes that there are always people who work consciously for the good of the oppressed groups. It also intends to prove that both Whites and Blacks are human beings who have to enjoy their rights and dignity in the same way.

Our discussion will be centred on New Historicism theory. This school was born in Anglo-American history scholarship and began to be applied to texts in the late 1970s and early 1980s, as it reveals the human past and accordingly allows

the establishment of relation between the past and the present. New Historicists aim simultaneously at understanding the work through its historical context and to understand cultural and intellectual history through literature, which documents the new discipline of the theory of ideas. It is a school of literary theory grounded in critical theory that developed in the 1980s, primarily through the work of the critic Stephen Greenblatt, its leading proponent. He is also a renaissance scholar and a founding editor of the journal *Representations*. New Historicism gained widespread influence in the 1990s.

Michel Foucault, another exponent of New Historicism theory, based his approach both on his theory of the limits of the collective cultural knowledge and on his technique of examining a broad array of documents in order to understand the episteme of a particular time. New Historicism is claimed to be a more neutral approach to historical events, and sensitive towards different cultures. This term is also associated with the empirical social sciences as H. Aran Veeser notes in an *Introduction to the New Historicism* that

> It brackets together literature ethnography, art, history, and other disciplines and sciences its politics, its novelty, its relationships to other prevailing ideologies all remain question. (xi)

This proves the complexity of New Historicism, and shows that it embraces many areas of literature. In fact, New Historicism is a critical movement interested in proving a thick description of the historical contexts of literature. It has remained the most "unstable" of all current theoretical and critical approaches to literature, since the emergence of New Historicism on the critical

scene in the 1980s. It is concerned with regarding, writing, and teaching rather than a simple description of actions. As Carolyn Porter observes, New Historicism arises out of a diverse set of practices that are not in themselves new: "The turn toward history" has been an evidence for sometime.

Many scholars in English and American Universities–ranging from Frederic Crews, George Watson and E.D. Hirsch Jr., and on the one hand of the scale to Frederic Jameson, Terry Eagleton, and Frank Lentricchia on the other hand, have raised a clamour for a return to historical scholarship in the academic study of literature. Critics of this school hold that within a society there is a dominant group that determines what is acceptable or not for a larger body. Throughout time, dominant groups have developed and maintained systems of human domination. This is what happened to Blacks in the South American areas, they were subjugated and excluded from the socio-economic and political process, but ended by becoming free men and White people became conscious that Black people are also human beings like them.

New Historicism theory is tenable to this work under study because in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, dominant group of people maintained and developed systems of Blacks' domination. Black people were inferior to Whites, Jim who is older than Huck, a small white boy, is a good example of such a case. Besides, this theory is applicable to this work in the sense that it helps to analyse Mark Twain's change from a pro-slavery to anti-slavery person and a breaker of racial barriers.

This study is not conducted on a virgin ground. Indeed, both the author and his works have attracted much attention among critics. For instance, Thomas Inge in

his *Introduction to Huck Finn among the critics* states that: Mark Twain nonetheless echoed the feelings of a growing minority of Americans who began to question the purpose and direction of the new century (vii). He further says that a certain growing minority of Americans began to view their society with its slaveholding mentality, its morality and its theological beliefs as absurd; that they were the only ones to be aware of the cruelties that Americans were doing under the disguise of good manners, and a strict morality of the puritanical origin. In fact, Mark Twain portrays Huck Finn as a character who trusts and accepts a nigger as his best friend, representing innocence in a brutal society, which was totally corrupted up to the point that anyone who did the right thing was automatically rejected by the society.

Different from several writers who were not disturbed by the prevailing situation in American society, Twain has found that there was nothing to praise. It is probably the reason why Garry Wills, cited in *The Mythologizing of Mark Twain*, says:

> To understand America, read Mark Twain. If I believed in Sortilege, Twain would have to be my holy book. No matter what new craziness pops up in America, if I find it described before hand by him. (xiii)

Mark Twain views his society as a perverted one, a distorted industriousness and a cruel racism. Besides, Haranungarawe, M. in Black characterisation in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* writes that Huck repudiates his society physically, morally and spiritually. He goes ahead to say that Huck makes himself an outsider and behaves as if he were not

concerned with the society's conventions. As a matter of fact, he continues saying that Huck does not hesitate to question what ought to be taken for granted, especially when it comes to the question of religion. He says that Huck considers all these beliefs as the lies of the society and consequently that Mark Twain is presented as an interpreter and a product of his culture.

Williams Dean Howells argues in *Huck Finn among the Critics*:

> Mark Twain was the first, if not the only, man of his section to betray a consciousness of the grotesque absurdities in the Southern inversion of the civilised ideals in behalf of slavery, which must have them upside down in order to walk over them safely. No American of the Northern birth or breeding could have imagined he spiritual struggle of Huck Finn in deciding to help the Negro Jim to his freedom, even though he should be forever despised as a Negro thief in his native town, and perhaps eternally lost through the blackness of his sin. (57)

Mark Twain is among the minority of the white writers who dare talk about American cruelties towards Blacks. In creating the character of Huck Finn in his novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Twain wants not only to spread widely his ideas about slavery, but also to awaken the consciousness of other Whites to change their minds as well as to abolish slavery and let Blacks be free.

However, some other commentators reject Twain as a social critic. Constance Rourke in *American Humour: A Study of National Character* states:

> It is a mistake to look for the social critic- even manqué- in Mark Twain. In a sense the whole American comic tradition had been that of social criticism. But this had been instinctive and incomplete, and so it proved to be in Mark Twain. (168)

In fact, Twain's criticism is not complete since the ending vindicates some elements that his criticism aimed at. Sculley Bradley as cited by Judith Flatterly in *Samuel Langhorne Clemens Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* says:

> Tom's and Miss Watson's obsession with codes are exposed as useless bunches of lies. Later, he Will say the following on Tom and Miss Watson: "The two characters are thus connected through their mutual possession of the syndrome of morality, aggression and hypocrisy." (271)

Tom appears more human than Huck and Jim, he is an embodiment of White Americans in their self-esteem in good manners and high devotion to transmit them to the most reluctant. In addition, Adams J.P. in *The Unity and coherence of Huckleberry Finn* argues the following:

> The wise and the good and the holy were unanimous in the conviction that slavery was right, righteous, sacred, the peculiar pet of deity and a condition with the slave himself ought to be daily and nightly thankful for. Blacks are forbidden to practice their African religion on the American continent. White people obliged slaves to adopt Christianity.

> This is accomplished in part by acquainting the slaves with the Bible. However, the idea brought a lot of controversy in white circles. It was feared that the Negro would find in the Bible the implications of human equality that would push him to make efforts to be free. (71)

Within this quotation, Adams shows the atrocities of slavery. According to him, the Bible, which teaches human equality, encourages slaves to achieve freedom, liberty for all.

For easy comprehension, this work is structured into five sections, a general introduction, three chapters and a general conclusion. The general introduction includes: the background of the study, the biography of the author, statement of the problem, the aim of the work, hypothesis, scope and delimitation, methodology, literature review and the structure of the work.

The first chapter entitled "Text and context: The History of slavery" analyses the characteristics of American people and society during the 19$^{th}$ century, and some negative consequences of slavery on the African-American people.

The second chapter entitled "Slave experience and racial consciousness" studies the hard life slaves underwent in southern American areas. In fact, it sets out to analyse the chattel slavery with its physical and moral violence slaves among them, Jim, suffered in those areas. It also studies how Blacks became conscious of their race and fought for their liberation.

The third chapter, "Breaking Racial Barriers: Forging brotherhood", studies the change of Mark Twain through the character of Huck Finn. In fact, he was pro-

slavery, and then changed his mind to become anti-slavery. In the character of Huck Finn, he ends by befriending Jim, a runaway nigger after he became conscious that Black people are also human beings like Whites. Twain becomes not only anti-slavery, but also a breaker of racial barriers.

The general conclusion summarises the major arguments raised in the course of our study, brings out some recommendations and findings.

# CHAPTER ONE

## TEXT AND CONTEXT: THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY

This chapter sets out to analyse the characteristics of the American people and society during the 19th century, and some negative consequences of slavery on the African people. In fact, the issue of slavery is not a recent historical event. It was practiced across Africa from a long time to the modern era. Many societies in Africa recognised slaves merely as property, but others saw them as dependents that eventually might be integrated into the families of slave owners. So, as in many places around the world, slavery in Africa resulted from warring groups taking captives. Those captives were often sold and transported to more distant places. The institution of slavery started in America in the 1700s. Millions of Blacks were dragged from their homeland to the New World, the strange and hostile land for slaves.

Brought from Africa to the United States of America, Black people were going to lead a life of the oppressed, the exploited, a life of the outsiders. However, before slavery, Africa was well organised with established norms and institutions. It had its own culture, language, system of belief, policy, economy, and social units like other continents in the world. It was, therefore, a well ordered society characterised by the calm of tribal societies and the purity of the culture, because it was free from the taint of external values. Africans, like other races in the world, were generous people who lived in a neatly close society. Unfortunately, slavery damaged all those good things in Africa. Francis E. Kearns in *Black Identity* portrays such an ordered way of life that has passed in Africa. He opines that:

> We had our own civilisation in Africa before we were captured and carried off to this land. you may smile when we call the way of life we lived in Africa "civilisation", but in numerous expects the culture of many of our tribes was equal to that of the lands from which the slave captors came. We smelted iron, danced, made music and recited folk poems. We sculptured, worked in glass, spun cotton and wool, wove baskets and cutlery; we fashioned tools and utensils of brass, bronze, ivory, quartz, and granite, we had our own literature, our own systems of law, religion, medicine, science and education; we painted in colour upon rocks; we raised cattle, sheep, and goats; we planted and harvested grains, in short centuries before the Romans ruled, we lived as men. (6)

Africans regret the life they used to enjoy in their homeland. In the United States, they were going to live differently, because the intention of slavery was to develop the white race to the detriment of the black one. The defenceless millions of Blacks have been exploited; they constituted the majority of the working class and the labouring masses, as slavery was fundamentally based on economic interests. Consequently, the plantations of white people which were not fully cultivated due to the scarcity of the labour were cultivated. The slave owners increased the economic power of the entire United States and powered the white industries. The North, whose economy was founded on industry, was opposed to the South, which was agrarian.

Apart from working for nothing, slaves underwent inhuman treatments. As Frederick Douglass notes in *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave*, it is revealed that the southern plantations in America were harbours of bondage:

> Every year brings with its multitude of this class of slaves. It was doubtless in consequence of knowledge of this fact, that one great statesman of the south predicted the downfall of slavery by the inevitable laws of the population. Whether this prophecy is ever fulfilled or not, it is nevertheless plain that a very different looking class of people are springing up at the south and are now held in slavery from those originally brought to this country from Africa; and in their increase to no other good, it will do away the force of the argument that God cursed Adam, and therefore American slavery is right. If the lineal descendants of Ham are alone to be scripturally enslaved, it is certain that slavery at the south must soon become unscriptural, for thousands are ushered into the world, annually who like myself, owe their existence to white fathers most frequently their own masters. (11)

In fact, Black people underwent an "earthly hell" because they were taken as cursed people full of sins. Besides the cruelty, brutality and oppression which robbed the slaves of the warmth of humanity, slavery appeared as a segregating and degrading institution. Slaves had no liberty of action, no freedom of will; they were bound and controlled by the will of others, so of the race. They could

not operate on their own will, and could not make their own decision. In other words, they were wholly subject to the White masters' whims and caprices, and this mainly in the southern part of American society.

In *Slaves No More*, Ira Berlin, Barbara J. Fields, Steven F. Miller, Joseph P. Reidy and Leslie S. Rowland wrote:

> Slavery in American south rested upon equal and uneasy balance of power between master and slave. In principle, the slaveholders' authority went almost unchallenged; in practice, it was limited by a variety of constraints. Refusing to be reduced to a mere extension of their owner's will, slaves did not willingly defer or relinquish their labour. Although slaveholders rarely hesitated to apply force in exacting deference and extorting labour, they found it both easier and more profitable to achieve these ends by conceding to the slaves some control over their own daily life. Such hard- won concessions helped mute the conflict inherent in slavery and permitted masters to maintain their dominant place in southern society. (10)

In fact, the southern part of the American society was so hostile to Black people. They worked under whites' control; hence they were not free of will and action. Somehow, slaveholders used even force to show their authority over Blacks.

Mark Twain shows us how people of colour were not free like other citizen as far as voting was concerned. Their rights were violated; some people of white colour took them as subjects to be put up at auction and sold. In his novel, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain, through the character of Pap, demonstrates such a behaviour. He swore he would never vote again as long as he lived, because there was a nigger who was allowed to vote. Pap was so furious to hear that and did not understand both people and the government, which gave such a liberty to a nigger. We read:

> ... but when they told me there was a state in this country where they'd let that nigger vote, I drawed out. I say I'll never vote again. Them's the very words I said; they all heard me; and the country may rot for all me- I'll never vote again as long as I live. And to see the cool way of that nigger- why, he would not a give me the road if I had not shoved him out 0' the way. I say to the people, why ain't this nigger put up at auction and sold. – that's what I want to know. And what do you reckon they said? Why, they said he could not be sold till he'd been in the state six months, and he had not been there that long yet. There, now- that's a specimen. They call that a government that call itself a government, and lets on to be a government, and thinks it is a government, and yet's got to set stock- still for six whole months before I can take ahord of a prowling , thieving, infernal, white- shirted free nigger... (13)

The quotation above shows us how Black people were minimised. They were not supposed to enjoy human rights in the same way like white people. Besides, Mark Twain continues to show us in the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, how Blacks were not free of will. In fact, Jim, Miss Watson's nigger, was older than Huck Finn and Tom, small white boys. The latter were somehow good with Jim; they wanted him to be free from slavery. But the way they used was risky particularly for Jim who was a slave. The worst was that Jim had to accept whatever those small boys told him, because White people were more intelligent than the Blacks no matter the age. Jim could not refuse even if he saw there was no sense in it. We read:

> So he told Jim how we'd have to smuggle in the rope-ladder pie, and other large things, by Nat,the nigger that fed him, and he must be on the look out, and not be surprised, and not led Nat see him open them; and we would put small things in uncle's coat pockets and he must steal them out; and we would tie things to aunt's upron strings or put them in her upron pocket, if we got a chance; and told him what they would be and what they were for. And told him how to keep a journal on the shirt with his blood, and all that. He told him everything. Jim he couldn't see no sense in the most of it, but he allowed we were white folks and knowed better than him; and he was satisfied, and said he would do it all just as Tom. (18)

White people did not give a chance to Black people in order to use their consciousness. They did not care about what could happen to them. Blacks had no liberty; they did not enjoy their health freely. In *Long Black Song*, the character began to identify the systematic nature of racist oppression. Silas, who owned his land but whose wife, Sarah, was unfaithful with a travelling salesman, confronted and killed the salesman. Then, he calmly awaited the white mob to lynch him. As Sarah looks on, Silas announces:

> The white folks aim never gimmie a chance! The ain never no black man a chance! They ai nothing in yo freedom yuh kin keep from em! They take yo lan! They take yo freedom! They take yo women! N then they take yo life! (125)

According to the quotation above, Whites did not give a chance to Blacks to enjoy their right as human beings; they even took Black wives from their husbands. In short, Whites took off Blacks' lives. What was worse was that Blacks could not protest in any case, they looked as if they were dumb in front of all those ill treatments they were subject to. A Black child could not refuse to be separated from his parents and vice versa. A husband could be separated from his family without saying goodbye. Slavery did not take into consideration, nor did it respect Negro family relationships. Through the character of Jim, Twain demonstrates the worse of such a separation. Huck Finn says that when he wakes up just at the daybreak, Jim was sitting there with his head down betwixt his knees, moaning and mourning to himself. He was thinking about his wife and his children, away up yonder, and he was low and homesick because he had

not ever been away from home before. He goes on saying that Jim was often moaning and mourning that way, nights, when he judged he was asleep, saying: Po little Lizabeth! Po little Johnny! Its might hard; I spec I ever gwyne to see you no mo, no mo! (138).

Jim was in great desperation, his family had fallen apart. He could not know neither where his wife was nor could have an idea about the place where his son could be. In fact, Whites did not care to separate even very younger children from their mothers. A child could stay with his mother just some days after his birth and he would be taken away soon. At six, a young slave was supposed to join adults in plantations, mothers also left babies at home and went with others in fields. Slave children grew up without parental affection at early age. Only little time was allowed to mothers to nurse babies in the night. Douglass decries such cases in the following words:

> My mother and I were separated when I was but an infant before I knew her as my mother. It is a common custom in the part of Maryland from which I ran away to part children from their mothers at a very early age. Frequently, before the child has reached its twentieth month, its mother is taken from it, and hired on some farm a considerable distance off, and the child is placed under the care of an old woman too old for field labor. (*Narrative of the Life of Fredric Douglass: An American Slave*, 22)

With such a situation, Negroes were so unhappy to grow up without enjoying parental affection because of separation. Black babies were taken care of by old mothers. Too old women unable to take care of children were doomed to live in isolation in the forest where they could eventually die. This happened to the grandmother of Douglass who remained alone and died helpless.

The period of slavery was too painful for Blacks. Many of them died during the hard times of the Middle Passage, some by beating, others by being hanged or hanged themselves or were thrown into water. Women killed their own children in order to prevent them from becoming future slaves. Kearns describes in *Black Identity* the miserable voyage into bondage. He says:

> In the summer, down in the suffocating depths of those ships, on eight or ten week voyage, we could go crazed for lack of air and water and in the morning the crew of the ship would discover many of used dead, clutching in rigor mortis at the throats of our friends, wives or children. (8)

The quotation above demonstrates how Blacks were violated from Africa to America, where they were brought by Whites. Whipping, death and hunger were the major sufferings they endured during and after the Middle Passage. Whites did not care of such happenings. Moreover, in case slaves attempted to run away and were unfortunately caught, their punishment was to be hanged. In fact, to hang a runaway Nigger appeared as the highest form of man to man cruelty. In Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Huck Finn was fearful that Jim was going to be hanged by Uncle Silas. He mentions: I wonder if Uncle Silas is

going to hang this Nigger. If I was to catch a Nigger that was ungrateful enough to run away, I wouldn't give him up, I'd hang him (181). Because of their race, Niggers had no choice to live. Their lives were in the hands of Whites who would eventually kill them or not. Huck, in the same novel, is wondering about what the men were going to do with Jim when he escapes from Watson's house and is captured by the Duke and the King and sold for forty dollars. Huck reports:

> I followed the men to see what they was going to do with Jim; and the old doctor and Uncle Silas followed after Tom into the house. The men was very huffy, and some of them wanted to hang Jim, for example to all the other Niggers around there, so they wouldn't be trying to run away, like Jim done, ...and keeping a whole family scared most to death for days and nights. (209)

Whites considered that to hang a slave was a mere thing or amusement. They did not consider the value of his life; they wanted him to stay under control. Because of the fear of punishments, Blacks were afraid to run away, but some of them tempted their chances to flee from slavery no matter how risky it was. Twain illustrates such a case through the character of Jim when the latter tells Huck how he ran away from Miss Watson. He says:

> I laid dah under de shavins all day. I'uz hungry,but I warn't afeared; bekase I knowed de missus en de widder wuz goin' to start to de camp-meetn' right arter breakfas'en be gone all day, en dey knows I goes off wid

> de cattle 'bout daylight, so dey wouldn' 'spec to see me roun' de place, en so dey wouldn' miss me tell arter dark in de evenin'. De yuther servants wouldn' miss me, kase dey'd shin out en take holiday, soon asde ole folks' uz out 'n de way. (53)

Though Jim escaped from Miss Watson, he is still not free and fears to be caught again by his former mistress. He hides himself during the day and continues his way during the night. However most of the slaves decided to run away because of religious hypocrisy of some Whites towards them. A good example is Twain's Miss Watson who took slavery for granted and source of fortune. She hid her hypocrisy behind religion in teaching Huck to be good in order to go to heaven but she is ready to sell Jim, her nigger, for eight hundred dollars. Jim reports:

> Well, you see, it'uz dis way. Ole Missus-dat's Miss Watson- she pecks on me all de time, en treats pooty rough, but she awluz said she wouldn' sell me down to Orleans. But I noticed dey wuz a nigger trader roun'de place considerable, lately, en I begin to git oneasy. Well, one night I creeps to de do' pooty late, en de do' warn't quite shet, en I hear de Missus tell de wilder she gwyne to sell me down to Orleans, but she didn't want to, but she could git eight hund'd dollars for me, en it 'uz a big stack o' money she could' resis. I lit out might quick, I tell you. (53)

In fact, Miss Watson seems to be good with her slave but she knows in her heart that she is about to sell him down to Orleans. This hypocritical behaviour pushes her slave to run away though he knows he would be hanged if ever he was caught. Miss Watson, a so pious person, was unable to resist in front of a certain sum of money, she did not consider a person's value. Her faith is meaningless, full of hypocrisy. Leo Marx in *Huck Finn Among Critics* portrays Miss Watson as follows:

> Miss Watson was a proselytizer for piety and good manners, and her greed provides the occasion for the journey in the first place. She is Jim's owner and decides to flee only when he realizes that she is to break her word (she cannot resist a slave trader's offer of eight hundred dollars), and sell him down the river away from his family. She pronounces the polite lies of civilization that suffocate Huck's spirit. (116)

Miss Watson, a slave owner, is not a real religious woman. She is hypocrite and does not love her slave. She learns Huck to do what she herself could not do in teaching him to be good in order to go to heaven. However, she knows that there is no good in selling Jim and forgets that a person's life does not have price.

Moreover, the 19$^{th}$ century in America was characterised by the Whites' illusion to be more intelligent than Blacks. The latter were considered as stupid persons. When a black person gave a good answer, it was like a miracle and Whites were astonished. Twain in his novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* demonstrates such a case through the answer Jim gives Huck when telling him about the king

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Solomon who ordered the child cut into two when two women came to him claiming to be the mothers of the same infant. He says:

> Blame the pint! I reck'n I knows what I knows. En mine you, de real pint is down furder-it's down deeper. It lays in de way Sollermun was raised. You take a man dat's got on'y one er two children; is dat man gwyne to waseful o' chillen? No, he ain't; he can't 'ford it. He know how to value 'em. But you take a man dat's got 'bout five million chillen runnin' roun' de house, en it's diffunt. He as soon chop a chile in two as a cat. Dey's plenty mo'. A chile er two, mo' er less, warn't no consekens to Sollermun, dad fetch him! (74)

This shows how slaves were not stupid but intelligent people. They were persons of thoughts, good ideas and judgements. Jim found Solomon full of humanity; in front of him all children are equal. This Jim's talk surprises Huck so much. He says he has never seen such a nigger; he was the most down on Solomon of any nigger. In fact, Jim becomes so famous for being wise, too, and Huck concludes saying that it is no use wasting words; you can't teach a nigger to argue (76).

Despite their intelligence, niggers were persons who could not be helped in any case. Whoever felt pity or helped them was supposed to commit a great crime. With the institution of slavery, there was even a Sunday school which taught people that any person who helped a slave would go to everlasting fire. Huck reports in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*:

> There was the Sunday school, you could agone to it; and if you'd a done it they'd a learnt you, there, that people that acts as I'd been acting about the nigger goes to everlasting fire. (166)

With the quotation above, a slave is considered as a sin itself which leads people to hell. In addition, Mark Twain said the same in his notebook on internet. He writes:

> In those old-holding days the whole community was agreed as to one thing-the awful sacradness of slave property. To help steal a horse or a cow was a low crime, but to help a hunted slave, or feed him or shelter him, or hide him, or comfort him, in his troubles, his terrors, his despair,' or hesitate to promptly betray him to the slave-baser crime, and carried with it a stain, a moral smirch which nothing could wipe away... and stick to it. (Slavery in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*)

A slave was even inferior to animals. He was a person to be alone and rejected in his problems and troubles. To comfort him, or hide him, feed or shelter him which are the basic human needs, all that was worse than to help steal a horse or a cow.

In a few words, the spectacle of slavery with its chains, slave ships and broken families touched on every Black person in the Southern states of America during the 19th century. The tragic experience of slavery in the New World left Africans

depleted in population, divided irremediably among themselves and despised as an inferior race in a world which had build a vision of racial hierarchy based on the inspiration of their enslavement. There were many innocents, particularly children. African parents sacrificed their children involuntarily to the attacks of raiders and the slaves themselves sentenced to death; they were clearly and uniquely the sacrificial victims. Yet, in other words, the slaves who survived had to contribute their energies to the wealth of a new community. Because of their skin, Blacks' liberty and freedom were taken off by Whites. They had no choice, they had to accomplish the Whites' will. They were oppressed and minimised. They were an inferior race that underwent the consequences of slavery, such as family separation, lack of parental affection and so on.

# CHAPTER TWO

## SLAVE EXPERIENCE AND RACIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

This chapter sets out to analyse the hard life slaves underwent in the South of America. This will largely be a textual analysis of Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. As history tells us, there have been two kinds of slavery: symbiotic and parasitic slavery. The symbiotic slavery is a kind of relationship linking two persons, where one, in the weak position, seeks protection from death, hunger, and so on, from his master. The parasitic slavery is always relying on benefiting from other persons and giving nothing in return. This kind of slavery has been practised particularly in the United States from the settlement of America up to the 19th century. It has been labelled chattel slavery. With this kind of slavery, Blacks underwent all kinds of ill-treatments, such as alienation, discrimination, and also physical and moral violence. Because of their skin, people of this colour were considered as subjects which could be sold or bought like other merchandises. They were subhuman, and had to obey whatever their masters told them to do.

In fact, in writing *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain wants to show us that the world he describes is the one in which he lived in Hannibal, Missouri, a State of stereotypical slave-owners. Negroes, members of a race of people with dark skin, who originally came from Africa, according to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, showed a great endurance throughout chattel slavery. They lived in miserable conditions, where they were wholly subject to their

White masters' whims and caprices and then by-and-by, they became conscious of their race and fought for their freedom.

When talking about the conditions of slavery, Josiah Herson wrote about his experience as a field hand. He recalls:

> Our dress was a towcloth...and a pair of coarse shoes once a year. We lodged in log huts...wooden floors were an unknown luxury. In a single room were huddled like cattle en or dozen persons, men, women and children There were neither bedsteads nor furniture .Our beds Were collections of straw and old rags....The wind whistled and the rain and snow blew in through the cracks, and the damp earth soaked in the moisture Till the floor was miry as a pig-sty. (Quoted in *World Book Encyclopaedia, 416*)

The quotation above shows us that slavery really means the exploitation of the coloured race. It is, therefore, the consequence and evidence of white racism. Blacks lived in hard conditions; nobody among Whites felt pity for them. The manner they were dressed was also pitiful. In one room, a dozen persons, men, women and children were gathered closely together like cattle, cows which are waiting to be slaughtered. Some persons did not understand such treatments of Black people in the United States. They ask themselves what the Blacks had done to bring this crazy world upon them as Richard Wright gives a hint of the predicament of Blacks in that area, in his *The Man Who Went to Chicago.* He declares: "Accepting my environment at its face value, trapped by my own

emotions, I kept asking myself what had Black people done to bring this crazy world upon them" (454). Mark Twain exposes to the World the evil of chattel slavery, in presenting Blacks as innocent victims. Moral and physical violence are good examples to demonstrate Whites inhumanity towards Black people. The majority of slaves worked in the fields, where they underwent constant supervision from their masters and overseers; they were used as tools to enrich the Whites. They were, in fact, transformed into little machines in the plantations, where they worked without rest.

To begin with moral violence, Blacks were sold like merchandise. In fact, to have one's family scattered or dispersed on the unfounded reason of selling human beings, and thus separating children from their parents in order to sell them at auction is pitiful. In Mark Twain's novel, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* Huck demonstrates such an incident when he says:

> The next day after the funeral, along about noontime, the girls' joy got the first jolt; a couple of niggers traders come along; and the king sold them the niggers reasonable, for three-day drafts as they called it, and away they went, the two sons up the river to Memphis, and their mother down the river to Orleans... it most made me down sick to see it. (148)

It was really scandalous to separate a mother from her children that way. It is also afflicting to hear children crying because of being separated from their parents. This instance testifies how cruel White people towards Black ones were; the latter were a source of income. They were sold and bought like mere

raw materials or products. The man who was addressing Huck emphasized that idea. He said: That's so, my boy-good-bye. If you see any runaway Niggers, you get help and nab them, and you can make some money by it. *(Huck Finn,* 91)

In this statement, there is a clue leading us to see Niggers as perpetual game of Whites. This is a kind of embodiment of moral violence; a person being sold as someone's own property, this is really terrible. Sometimes, a bad climate of understanding may occur because of money from the sale of Niggers. This is clearly shown by the conversation between the Duke and Huck. We read in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn:* "No! That old fool sold him, and never divided with me, and the money's gone. Sold him? Why, he was my nigger and that was my money. Where is he? –I want my nigger" (168).

Simply put, many white characters saw Black people in terms of property, particularly in terms of objects which could be sold, whenever the owner felt the need.

Moreover, the uppermost level of negation of Blacks is the mask White people used not to see Blacks' skin. When they saw those coloured people, they hunted them as if they were wild animals. In Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* Jim encounters such a mask when he put and was painted in King Lear's appearance by the Duke. Huck narrates:

> He was uncommon and bright, the duke was, and he soon struck it. He dressed Jim in King Lear's outfit-it was a long curtain-calco gown, and a white horse-hair wig and whiskers, and then he took his theatre-paint and painted Jim's face and

> hands and ears and neck all over a dead bull solid blue; like a man that's been drowned nine days..., he didn't only like he was dead, he looked considerable more than that. (132)

At this stage, Jim was no longer himself. He didn't appear in his usual dress, but in King Lear's. He was mutilated with several paintings; he was really alienated from himself. In addition, Slaves were less friendly and sympathetic towards Whites. The latter showed them how easily their food was matchable to that of a dog. This kind of alienation is evidenced by the way, Jim, a slave, was fed. The conversation between Huck and Tom, in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* illustrates that: "What did you think the vittles was for? For a dog So'd I. Well, it wasn't for a dog. Why? Because Part of it was watermelon (178). Besides ill-feeding, Jim underwent farcical indignities. He was for instance told by Huck and Tom to fill his room with spiders, rattlesnakes, and rats. Despite Jim's strong protest, those young boys end up filling his room with those animals. Moreover, Jim is an object of experiment. In fact, Huck and Tom wanted to experiment on Jim the notions Tom had read in books, about the ways prisoners escape from jail. Mars Tom says:

> Jim, don't act so foolish. A prisoner's got to have some kind of a dumb pet, and if a rattlesnake hain't ever been tried, why, there's more glory to be gained in your being the first to ever try it than any other way you could ever think of to save your life. But Jim, you got to have'm-they all do.So don't make no more fuss about it .Prisoners ain't ever without rats. There ain't no instance of it. And

> they train them,, and pet them, and learn them tricks, and they get to be as sociable as flies. But you got to play music to them. You got anything to play music on? *(Huck Finn*, 196)

Jim ceases to be a man since he allows Huck and Mars Tom to fill his hut with rats and snakes. He loses his dignity and individuality. The worse is when Mars Tom tells Jim to raise a flower which he will water with his tears and not with spring water as Jim proposes to him. Mars Tom mentions:

> Oh-there's one thing I forgot. Could you raise a flower here, do you reckon? Well, you try it, anyway. Some other prisoners has don it. Don't you believe it. We'll fetch you a little one, and you plant it in the corner, over there, and raise it. And don't call it mullen, call it Pitchiola-that's its right name, when it's in a prison. And you want to water it with your tears. You don't want spring water; you want to water it with your tears. It's the way the always do. (197)

Black people had no reason to do something. They did it because they were obliged. This quotation shows us how Jim was morally violated, because it is not understandable how someone could get a lot of tears that he could water a plant with it. Jim apologizes by saying that the flower will die in his hands but Tom does not accept the apology.

Instead of delivering Jim quickly and straightforward from the prison where he was, Tom wanted to try roundabout ways used by "best authorities" such as: Baron Trenck, Casanova, Benvenuto Chelleeny, and Henry IV who were involved in daring escape attempts. In a few words, Blacks were treated and considered as inferior to Whites. They were considered like infants if not wild animals or simple objects; they had nothing to say in front of White men and had to execute whatever they were told to do. They were victims of all sorts of moral violence and alienation.

Physical violence is another grief that black characters suffered such as flogging and hanging. In fact, a Nigger was considered as an object of horsewhipping, his suffering from flogging was known to everybody to constitute a paradigm for the cruellest kind of punishment. It was the famous punishment in the whole United States to correct the wrong-doers. Once a Black was before a White, guilty or not, a form of cruelty was to be expected by the latter at any rate. Often, slaves who had been beaten kept quiet; they didn't tell anybody what had happened to them. This is the case of Jim who was severely beaten and given a cuff or two, but never said nothing .Huck reports it in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn:* "They cussed Jim considerable, though, and give him a cuff or two, side the head, once in a while ,but Jim never said nothing ,and he never let on to know me" (209). In addition to Jim who did not tell anybody what happened to him, Pittman also said in *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*, that she did not cry even when she had seen so much beatings and sufferings. She argues:

> I didn't cry, I couldn't cry. I had seen so much beatings and suffering; I had heard about so much cruelty in those eleven or twelve years of my life I hardly knowed how to cry. (23)

Considering the quotation above, slaves were taken as wild animals by Whites. The latter didn't care about their sufferings. Those slaves were beaten till their flesh was flattened with lashes; their limbs were loaded with irons; their teeth and eyes were knocked, and their flesh was burned. Frederick Douglass expresses it in *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave.* He narrates the cruelty of Plummer-the overseer who takes pleasure in whipping slaves and castigating them. He says:

> I have often been awaken at the dawn of the day by the most heart rending shrieks of an own aunt of mine, whom he used to tie up a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was entirely covered with blood. No words no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose the louder she screamed, the harder he whipped and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest. He would whip her to make her scream and whip her to make her hush; and not until overcome by fatigue would be ceased to swing the blood clotted cowskin. (25)

This shows how Blacks endured all sorts of barbarities and inhuman degradations. It even gave an occasion for patrollers to massacre the poor slaves

mercilessly. In *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman,* Pittman portrays the horrible day of massacre and dehumanization of man by man in the following words:

> They came in on horses and mules as soon as they slow-wit. They surrounded him and started beating him with sticks of wood. Some of them had guns, but they would not waste a bullet. They beat him till he was down. I could hear his head crack like you hear dry wood break. The patrollers moved in the bushes to hunt for the rest of the people. Then when they spotted somebody, a bunch of them surround the person and beat him till they had knocked him unconscious or killed him. (21)

Slaves were beaten to death. They often appeared under the rope, chained, as if they had committed a crime. The worse was the food they were given, which was not to nourish them but to prevent them from dying. Chained hands and legs on the one hand, and living on water and bread, on the other hand, showed the bottom of harshness under which slaves lived. In Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* Huck opines that

> ...there's Jim chained by one leg, with a ten- foot hain, to the leg of his bed; why, all you got to do is to lift up the bedstead and slip off the chain (181). They took him to the same cabin, and put his own clothes on him, and chained him again, and not to no bed-leg, this time, but to a big staple drove into the bottom log, and chained his

> hands, too, and both legs, and said he warn't to have nothing but bread and water to eat.(209)

Slaves really suffered a cruelty which had no equal than itself, the cruellest, and the most pitiless one. Niggers preferred to be killed when caught running away than living in hopeless bondage. They worked to please the Whites, who were always satisfied on their fine tables, but the latter thanked them by all kinds of punishments. They ate meat, vegetables and bread, whereas slaves were badly nourished; many died of hunger. In *Forever Free: The Story of the Emancipation Proclamation,* Sterling said:

> We raise the wheat, they give us the corn;
> We bake the break; they give us the crust;
> We sift the meal, they give us the hust;
> We peel the meat, they give us the skin;
> And that's the way they take us in. (111)

To be Black means to be ill-treated by Whites. Those people of black skin were victims of moral and physical violence. As many of them died during slavery period, those who survived were totally desperate and prayed their gods to rescue them from bondage, but those gods, seemingly, were no longer alive. They did not answer to their prayers, and their living conditions evolved from bad to worse. Kearns, in *Black Identity,* narrates Blacks' sufferings and their gods' disappointment. He opines:

> Our gods were dead and answered us no more. The trauma of leaving our African home, the suffering of the

> Middle Passage, the thirst, the hunger, the horrors of the slave ship, all the hallowed us out, number us, stripped us, and left only physiological urges the feelings of fear and fatigue. (8)

With this quotation, Blacks were disappointed by their gods which seemed to be dead. They were desperate and tired from their sufferings. Such a fatigue pushed them to be aware of how Whites treated them because of their poor race. They regret their past times in Africa and how they used to enjoy life in their families. Jim in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* illustrates such a case. He decries:

> What makes me feel so bad dis time, ' uz bekase I hear Sumpn over yonder on the bank like a whack, er a slam, While ago, en it mine me er de time I treat my little' Lizabeth so ornery. She warn't on'y'bout fo'year ole, en she tuck de sk'yarlet-fever, en had a powful rough spell; but she got well, en one day she was a-stannin'aroun', en I says to her, I says:"shet de do. She never done it; jis'stood dar, kiner smilin' up at me. It make me mad; en I says agin, mighty loud, I says: "Doan'you hear me? Shet de do! She jis' stood de same way, kiner smilin' up I was a-bilin! I says: "I lay I make you mine! En wid Dat I fetch' her a slap side de head dat sont her a-Sprawlin". (131)

In fact, this Jim's monologue expresses his sadness, but it also shows us how bad slavery was touching family relationships. Jim was recalling how he used to enjoy life with his wife, talking and smiling to each other. This happened in

Africa before slavery, when they were together at home. Jim went on saying how his wife was taken away when he was in the other room. He says:

> Den I went into de yuther room, en' uz gone' bout Ten minutes, en when I come back, dah was dat do' stannin'open yit, en dat chile stannin'mos'right in it, a-lookin'down and mournin', en de tears runnin' down. My, but I wuz mad, I was agwyne for the chile but jis'den, 'long come de wind en slam it to, behine de chile, ker-blam! –en my lan', de chile never move! Oh, she was plumb deef en dumb, Huck, plumb and deef en dumb- en I'd ben a'treat'n her so. (131)

Slavery appeared as a surprise. If you left a place for a while, you came back and found your mate taken off.

However, slaves by-and-by became conscious of wrong deeds Whites did to them and tried their self-esteem to search for liberation. Jim who used to be rich hopes to become so again. He declares it in the conversation between him and Huck:

> Well, are you rich? No, but I ben rich wunst, and
> gwyne to be rich agin. Wunst I had foteen dollars
> but I tuck to specalat'n, en got busted out. (55)

In saying so, Jim shows that there is hope to get freedom and liberation. He goes ahead saying that he wants to get much money in order to buy his wife who was

owned on a farm close to where Miss Watson lived; and then they will both work to buy the two children, and if their master would not sell them, they will get an abolitionist to go and steal them (89). Huck is surprised by such a talk that Jim would not ever dared to utter in his life before. It was according to the old saying, "give a nigger an inch and he will take an ell" (89). In fact, Huck helped Jim to run away. Now Jim is thinking about buying his wife and stealing his children that belonged to another slave-holder. He acts freely as if he were in his own country. This means the wish of liberty and freedom.

To sum up this chapter, black characters underwent a hard life in the south of America. They suffered from all kinds of violence, individually or communally. Blacks were powerless in such a way that they could not escape such ill-treatments. What's more, Blacks had undergone the most inhuman acts like to be whipped or killed like wild animals or sold like mere merchandises. White people did not care about those sufferings they made Blacks endure. Death of slaves was meaningless to Whites. Slaves were made to live a dreadful life in America. Hence, their lives were not as dear as those of human beings. All those ill- treatments were directed to Blacks because there have been kinds of racial barriers separating them from Whites. In order to improve Blacks' living conditions and bring about their liberation, it is necessary to forge brotherhood between Blacks and Whites.

# CHAPTER THREE

## BREAKING RACIAL BARRIERS: FORGING BROTHERHOOD

This chapter sets out to examine the moves taken by the main character to break racial barriers that stand between the Blacks and the Whites in America. We will try to show how Mark Twain changed the white stand by becoming anti-slavery. In real life, he wrote against racism and from 1880s to his death, he befriended Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington, who were blood and flesh against slavery. Mark Twain also wrote very critical essays about atrocities committed against Black people, and created one of the outstanding black characters in the American Literature, a nigger, Jim mainly talked about in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* He befriended Huck Finn, a young white boy, who makes himself an outsider. By breaking racial barriers, he behaves in ways contrary to the standards of his society and his new association with Jim, who had to endure the hardships of being a slave. They created a new kind of relationship.

Moreover, Mark Twain recognises that, from the creation of Jim, he made a Black emerge from invisibility to visibility, from darkness to light. In that perspective, that author demonstrated that Black people are fully human beings and their relationships with Whites should be improved and advocated for interracial brotherhood. This is clearly illustrated in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, in which Huck and Jim befriend each other and live together like brothers. They meet in the bush, Huck escapes from his pap's cabin, and Jim runs away from Miss Watson. There, Huck has to kill an animal for meat because he has a

gun as Jim declares it: But you got a gun. Oh yes, you got a gun. Dat's good. Now you kill sumfin en I'll make up the fire. *(Huck Finn*, 52) After, they ate the meal they prepared together. Huck reports:

> So we went over to where the canoe was, and while he built a fire in a grassy open place amongst the trees, I fetched meal and bacon and coffee, and coffee-pot and frying-pan, and sugar and tin cups, and the nigger was set back considerable, because he reckoned it was all done with witchcraft. I catched a good big cat-fish, too, and Jim cleaned him with his knife, and fried him. When breakfast was ready, we lolled on the grass and eat smoking hot. (52)

Really, Huck and Jim become not only friends but also brothers. When they finish their breakfast, they go on talking about the fact that pushes each one to escape. Huck tells Jim what has caused him to be there, and says it is smart. As far as Jim is concerned, he tells Huck the truth and asks him not to tell anybody. Huck accepts to be called a low down abolitionist and be despised for keeping secret. He says:

> Well, I did. I said I wouldn't, and I'll stick to it. Honest injun I will. People would call me a low Down abolitionist and despise me for keeping-mum-but that don't make no difference. I ain't agoing to tell, and I ain't agoing back there any-ways. So now, le's know all about it. (*Huck Finn*,53)

In saying so, Huck reinforces his brotherhood with Jim, who finally speaks freely to Huck. However, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has been a great book that troubled most Americans who were proslavery, because it reveals all the secrets hidden in slavery, and it tells the truth. John C. Gerber reports it in *Mark Twain* when he says: That book was made by Mark Twain and he told the truth mainly. (96)

In order to say more about the realities of American society, he put other characters of his society representing all the walks of life. In *Huck Finn Among Critics,* John C. Gerber asserts:

> Having created such a character as narrator, Twain can hardly use him for his usual plunges into washoe-type humor. Huck, who in a sense becomes stronger than Twain, won't be a party to such foolishness, though he is willing to report it as he hears it from others. Twain is forced either to tone down his exaggeration and burlesques or to parcel them out to other characters. (411)

Through his fictive character, Huck Finn, Mark Twain is determined to speak loudly and widely for freedom of Black people. Even though he is a white descendant of the American society, Huck Finn acts as an abolitionist. He breaks all racial barriers and helps Jim to attain freedom. However, he discovers Jim's humanity after living together on Jackson's Island. He does all his possible to save Jim by taking the risk of disguising himself as a girl in order to find out

information about Jim. He agrees with him who proposes him to dress like a girl so as he could not be recognised. This is stated in *Huck Finn:*

> ...canoe and dug out for a place a mile and a half below, as hard as I could go. I landed, and slopped through the timber and up the ridge and into the cavern. There Jim Next morning I said it was getting slow and dull, and I wanted to get a stirring up, some way. I said I reckoned I would slip over the river and find out was going on. Jim liked that notion; but he said I must go in the dark and look sharp. Then he studied dait over and said, couldn't I put on some of them old things and dress up like a girl? That was a good no- tion, too. So we shortened up one of the calco gowns and I turned up my trowser-legs to my knees and got into it. (60)

So, Huck goes away and knocks at the door of an old woman, who is about forty years old. Huck makes up his mind that he wouldn't forget he is a girl. There, he lies many times in changing his name. He begins by Sarah Williams, by-and-by, M-Mary Williams; after, George Peters, and at the end, "Sarah Mary Williams George Alexander Peters". He does all that to convince the old woman, Mrs Judith Loftus, but in vain, that he is a girl.

However, he gets the information he wants. He hears that Jim is thought to have killed Huck Finn, and that there is a reward out for him, three hundred dollars. But also, Jim is searched for Jackson's Island. Then, Huck tries to go back quickly, in order to tell Jim to flee from the Island. We read it in the novel:

> When I struck the head of the Island I never waited to blow, though I was most winded, but I shoved right into the timber where my old camp used to be, and started a good fire there on high-and-dry spot. Then I jumped in the laid, sound asleep on the ground I roused him out and says: "Git up and hump yourself, Jim! There ain't a minute to lose. They're after us! (65)

Jim asks no question, he does not say a word; but the way he works for the next half an hour shows how he is scared. So, Huck and Jim put everything they have on their raft and succeed to run away very quickly from Jackson's Island without being noticed. They go to Ohio in order not to be found by people from town. In the night, they see a boat broken in the water whose owners are a gang of murders. They want to help them but think they would be caught. They decide to hunt up that boat; Huck hunts the lapboard and Jim, the stabboard. Huck warns Jim to hide himself in order not to be killed or sold by those murderers. In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* Huck states:

> Quick, Jim, it ain't no time for fooling around and moaning; there's a gang of murders in yonder, and if we don't hunt up their boat and set her drifting down the river so these fellows can't get away from the wreck, there's one of'em going to be in a bad fix But if we find their boat we can put all of'em in a bad fix-for the sheriff'll get'em. Quick-hurry! I'll hunt the labboard side, you hunt the stabboard. You start at the raft, and- (69)

In fact, Huck is, indeed, over racial barriers. He loves Jim as his real brother. As Jim is a runaway nigger, Huck succeeds to save him telling the men with guns in search for five runaway niggers that he is with his father who has small-pox, a highly infectious, often fatal disease at the time. The men are convinced, and being fearful of the illness, they give him twenty dollars gold piece on that board. We read it in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*:

> Well, there's five niggers run off to-night, up yonder above the head of the bend. Is your man white or black? I didn't answer up prompt. I tried to, but the words wouldn't Come. I tried for a second or two, to brace up and out with it, but I warn't man enough-hadn't the spunk of a rabbit. I see I was weakening; so I just give up trying, and up and says-He's white. ...your pap's got the small-pox, and you know it precious well. Why didn't you come out and say so? Do you want to spread it all over? (90)

Moreover, Huck was not tempted to sell Jim or let him caught, even in front of a reward. He said he won't let any runaway niggers get by him if he can help it (*Huck Finn*, 91). Jim was so glad and thanked his best friend. He says:

> I was a listenin' to all de talk, en I slips into de river en was gwyne to shove for sho'if dey and come aboard Den I was gwyne to swim to de raf agin when dey was gone. But lawsy, how you did fool'em, Huck! Dat wuz de smartes'dodge! I tell you, chile, I'speck it save'ole

> Jim-ole Jim ain't gwyne to forgit you for dat, honey.
> (Huck Finn, 91)

Jim dares call Huck Finn, a white boy, honey. This shows how Jim, the runaway slave, is happy because of what Huck does for him as protection. One realizes that, in order to be safe, Black characters cannot be themselves. If Huck does not pretend that Jim is a white man, who is even suffering from small-pox, the skiff and the two men would catch Jim and sell him at auction. So, the fact that Jim thanks Huck is reasonable. He recognises Huck's help.

Besides that, Huck and Jim don't cease to show how brotherly they become. Both of them are furious when Huck runs a big old-fashioned double-log house and lives with the Grangerfords family and Jim in the swamp. By-and-by, Huck succeeds to leave the house of the Grangerfords while they still want him to stay with them. He runs through the woods and makes for the swamp in order to meet Jim; unfortunately, Jim is not on his Island. Huck, unhappy, tramps off in a hurry for the crick, and crowds through the willows, red-hot to jump aboard and gets out of that awful country; the raft is gone. Then, he is surprised to hear Jim's voice sounding: Good lan'! Is dat you, honey? Doan' make no noise. (*Huck Finn,* 106)

Huck is so glad to meet Jim once again, and nothing ever sounds so good before. So, he runs along the bank of a river and gets aboard. Jim grabs him and hugs him. He is very happy too to see Huck once more as he says it:

> Laws bless you, chile, I' uz right down sho'you's dead
> gin. Jack's been heah, he say he reck'n you's been shot,

> kase you didn'come home no mo'; so I's jes' dis minute a startin' de raf'down towards de mouf er de crick, so's to be all ready for to shove out en leave soon as Jack comes agin en tells me for certain you is dead. Lawsy, I's mighty glad to git you back agin, honey. (106)

Somehow, Jim appears as Huck's father. He feeds him during difficult period. Huck states it when he says that he does not have a bite to eat since yesterday. Jim gets out some corn-dodgers and buttermilk, and pork and cabbage, and the greens (*Huck Finn, 107*). Huck appreciates that food, and then, has a good time. He is also glad to get away from the feuds, and so is Jim, to get away from the swamp. They feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft, all racial barriers broken.

Being in the river, they met two other fellows who asked to be saved. They were the King and the Duke. While the latter wanted to know whether Jim was a runaway nigger, Huck denied it by saying: Goodness sakes, would a runaway nigger run south (*Huck Finn, 112).* To convince them, Huck told them that he was his family's nigger, and that all his family members were dead, except pa, his brother Ike and him. This was the reason why Huck and Jim were there, according to Huck. They were all joyful to escape from those two men. Huck sings out: Out with you Jim! Glory be to goodness, we're shut of them! (*Huck Finn,* 161) and declared their happiness in the same novel:

> Jim lit out, and was a coming for me with both arms spread, he was so full of joy; but when I glimpsed him in the lighting, my heart shot up in my mouth, and I went

> overboard backwards; for I forgot he was old King Lear and a drownded A-rab all in one, and it most scared the livers and lights out of me. But Jim fished me out, and was going to hug me and bless me, and so on, he was so glad I was back and we was shut of the King and the Duke. (161)

However, while they were enjoying their liberty and freedom, Huck noticed a sound. It was a surprise for him and Jim, the King and the Duke met them once again. Huck and Jim got uneasy and were separated again. Jim was sold to Silas Phelp' for forty dollars, things which caused so much trouble to Huck, who kept thinking how he could liberate Jim. He was confronted with a dilemma; first, he was afraid of going to hell, and second, he remembered how they used to live like brothers on Jackson's Island. He finally decided to go to hell provided that his mission to flee Jim succeeds. So, he kept silence and didn't send the letter to Miss Watson. In *Form and Fable in American Fiction,* Daniel Hoffman reports:

> The King has sold Jim and Huck figures Jim Would be better of being a slave back home."I was trying to make my mouth say I would do the right thing and the clean thing, and go and write that nigger's owner and tell where he was; but deep down in me I knowed it was a lie and he knowed. You can't pray a lie-I found that out". Huck writes the letter to Miss Watson, but he still can't pray. At last he decides to steal Jim out of slavery again. "All right, then, I'll go to hell"-and tore it up. (347)

But also, in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* Huck reports:

> I felt good all washed clean of sin for the first time I had ever felt so in my life, and I knowed I could pray now. But I didn't do it straight off, but laid the paper down and set there thinking-thinking how good it was all this happened so, and how near I come to being lost and going to hell. ... I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: "All right then, I'll go to hell"-and tore it up. (166-7)

In fact, Huck was mature enough on such a decision, he did not want to inform Miss Watson about where Jim was because she could go to Silas Phelps and take back her nigger back. At this level, Huck broke all kinds of racial barriers and considered Jim as human. In *Huck Finn Among the Critics,* it is reported:

> The village code and the natural code clashed and conflict was terrifying. The village code (94) warned him that hell yawned for one who helped a slave escape and the human code warned him that betrayal was a black guardly thing. With the fear of hell upon him he wrote to Miss Watson, and then his sense of the kindliness of Jim, the honest humanity under the black skin, rose up in fierce protest. (306)

Through the character of Huck Finn, Mark Twain shows us that Black people are also human beings. John C. Gerber asserts, in *Mark Twain,* the fact that

Huck Finn decides to go to hell, and then, judges good not to send the letter to Miss Watson. He asserts:

> At first, he surrenders to his conscience, and writes Miss Watson a note. Immediately he feels washed clean but then begins to think how helpful and decent Jim has been to him. So, following his heart, he says to himself: "All right, then, I'll go to hell"-and tears up the note. (101)

This kind of brotherhood which exists between Huck and Jim goes beyond Whites' understanding. Huck checks then for stealing Jim from where he was sold. Such a thing was too difficult to realize, but Huck did everything possible. He accepted to accomplish a dirty low-down business as he affirmed it in front of Tom who, after all, helps Huck in his engagement. Huck was so surprised when he heard Tom Sawyer says so. The conversation made between the two boys, in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* illustrates the surprise. We read:

> All right; but wait a minute. There's one more thing a thing that nobody don't know but me. And that is, there's a nigger here that I'm trying to steal out of slavery-and his name is Jim-old Miss Watson's Jim.What! Why Jim is-I know what you'll say. You'll say it's dirty low-down business; but what if it is?-I'm low down; and I'm agoing to steal him, and I want you to keep mum and not let on. Will you? I'll help you steal him! Oh, shucks, you're joking. I ain't joking either. (174)

However, Huck let go all holts then, like he was shot. It was the most astonishing speech he ever heard and could not believe Tom being a nigger stealer. He thought Tom was joking, whereas Huck was so serious in whatever he said about stealing Jim. In the same novel, Huck continued: "Well, then, joking or no joking, if you hear anything said about a runaway nigger, don't forget to remember that you don't know nothing about him, and I don't know nothing about him" (174).

Indeed, Tom changed his cruel attitude. Before, he had even founded a gang based on principles of robbing people, killing them and making them prisoners till they were ransomed. Now, he becomes an eminently respectable and conventional member. He told Huck that he was on the side of the devil to steal a nigger in order to convince him. Thomas Inge in *Huck Finn Among the Critics*, quoting Carson Gibb, says:

> Huck asks himself whether Tom Sawyer was actually going to help steal that nigger out of slavery. That was the thing that was too many for me. Here was a boy, what was respectable and well brought up(...) and here he was,without any more pride or rightness, or feeling, than to stoop to his business, and make himself a shame and his family a, shame, before everybody. I couldn't understand it to no way. (433)

So, Huck and Tom went on thinking about the way they could steal Jim. Then, they befriended the nigger who fed him. This one let them go and see whether the vittles were for feeding the dogs, and there, they saw Jim. Tom gave the

nigger a dime and said they would not tell anybody. They also forbade Jim to sing out when he saw them. They told him they were going to set him free.

In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* Tom says: Don't ever let on to know us. And if you hear any digging going on nights, it's us: we're going to set you free. (181)

However, Huck and Tom were different in their behaviour. While Huck did not care shucks for the morality, Tom did. Huck was too decisive on his mission as he declares it: "Picks is the thing, moral or no moral; and as for me, I don't care shucks for the morality of it, no how" (186).

This is the time to steal Jim. Tom proposes to use non-signed writings to warn the people that something is up. By using those letters, they want not to be suspected by Uncle Silas, who will think a gang of robbers do it. Besides, they want Jim to put on nigger woman's clothes. Huck was more interested in saving Jim than Tom, who sought adventure only. Even though they plan complicated strategies, they all succeed. We read it in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn:*

> All right, I ain't saying nothing; I'm the servant-girl. Who's Jim's mother? I'm his mother. I'll hook a gown from Aunt Sally. Well, then, you'll have to stay in the cabin when me and Jim leaves. Not much. I'll stuff Jim's clothes full of straw and lay it on his bed to represent his mother in disguise: and Jim'll take Aunt Sally's gown off of me and wear it, and we'll all evade together. (200)

Jim becomes a free man once more, due to Huck's attitude against slavery. Huck is so joyful and when they stepinto the raft, he says: Now, old Jim, you're a free man again, and I bet you won't ever be a slave no more*(Huck Finn, 203)*. While Huck is enjoying Jim's liberation, Tom is shot by members of vigilance Committee of the town, who follow them when escaping. So, Jim's humanity causes him to be caught again, because he refuses to continue his way letting Tom wounder alone. He helps the doctor to nurse Tom. John C. Gerber asserts it in *Mark Twain:*

> The silly and, for Jim, painful burlesques of gothic romances that follow come to a head when fifteen local farmers with guns and dogs arrive to take a hand. Tom and Huck quickly pull Jim out of hole they have dug under the shed, and attempt to run off with him. But Tom is shot in the leg, and Jim is recaptured when he insists on staying with him until a doctor can be obtained. (101)

In fact, Jim feels pity for Tom. He stays with him till the doctor comes, and does not care about being brought back to slavery. Such a case demonstrates how Blacks are endowed with stimuli, spontaneity, creativity and the ability to love other people and nature without the expectation of material gain which is not the case for Whites. Leopold S. Senghor supports this when he says:

> The Negro is quite different. America psycho-technicians have already confirmed that his reflexes are more natural better adapted. That explains his utilization in industry and in the technical services of the armed forces in a higher per-

> centage than that which he represents in the population of the United States of America. But let us take up again the thread of our story first, the Negro is by his color as the primordial right. He does not see the object, he feels it.It is the pure sensorial field of the third day development of a worm. (Quoted in Pastor's *Roots of Soul*, 53)

The character of Huck also showed the spirit of people, who loved others without expecting material reward in return. Seeing Jim recaptured, he tried to protect him from being noticed by the doctor he was escaping from. So, he was obliged to lie about the cause that Tom was shot. Then, he told the doctor that Tom was shot by his gun when dreaming, and added that they were hunting. He said so in order not to reveal that they were helping a nigger to escape. Huck's lie was unsuccessful; Jim was brought back to Uncle Silas. There, Jim suffered more and more than ever; some people wanted him to be killed. However, the doctor valued Jim's humanity when he helped him nurse Tom, what caused Jim to be saved. He says:

> Don't be no rougher on him than you're obliged to, because he ain't a bad nigger. When I got to where I found the boy, I see I couldn't cut the bullet out without some help, and he warn't in no condition for me to leave; to go and get help; and he got a little worse and a little worse, and after a long time he went out of his head, and wouldn't let me come anigh him, any more, and said if I chalked his raft he'd kill me, and no end of wild

> foolishness like that, (...). He ain't no bad nigger, gentlemen that's what I think about him. (*Huck Finn*, 209-10)

After expressing his satisfaction and sympathy with Jim, the doctor shows how Jim displays human values by giving such a help. Huck is mighty thankful for the doctor Jim's consideration, and stays with Jim till he is declared free, out of bondage when Uncle Silas, Aunt Sally, and Aunt Polly, do so. Jim's liberation is reported in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn:*

> We had Jim out of chains in no time, and when Aunt Polly and Uncle Silas and Aunt Sally found out how good he helped the doctor nurse Tom, they made a heap of fuss over him, and fixed him up prime, and give him all he wanted to eat, and a good time, and nothing to do. (214)

Huck is glad with Jim's liberation and is satisfied to have refused Aunt Sally's civilisation. He succeeds in his mission to go over racial barriers and see Jim out of bondage. He also reaches Ohio, which is his dream for a long time.

To sum up this chapter, Mark Twain, through his novel, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* showed how some White people, Huck Finn mainly, and others of the slave period in America, broke racial barriers. They took into consideration Blacks' humanity, through the character of Jim in that novel. Some slaveholders sympathized with slaves, and sometimes expressed their free will to release them, and help them to run away. Those who had that spirit chose to rebel against the White man's inhuman laws which perpetually kept Blacks

into bondage. In this novel, Huck assumed the act of breaking all barriers based on race. He even helped a slave to run away and became then brothers. He was used as a good weapon to struggle for Blacks' freedom and revealed the realities about American society. Then, Mark Twain invited other pro-slavery men to be cooperative with Blacks and change their mind. From there, they would change the whole American society of the slave period in a free state for everybody both Blacks and Whites.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

This work set out to demonstrate that the process of brotherhood involves the breaking of racial barriers, hence the change in attitude manifested by Mark Twain towards slavery. It further examined the cruelties undergone by slaves in the South of America, which served as experimental grounds for the oppression of Blacks. This work also exposed to what extent race became the source of prestige for Whites and of oppression for Blacks.

In our discussion, we realised that slavery is an inhuman institution which debased Black people. This was mainly practised by the overwhelming majority of the Whites in the South of America. Blacks were taken from their homeland, Africa, and were chained and transported to America. Once in America, they served for white economic advancement as the South was agrarian whereas the North was industrialised. Slaves were dehumanised for more than two and half centuries. Within that time, they experienced all forms of racial injustice and mistreatments; they also lost their culture. Besides, slaves had no liberty of action, nor had they the freedom of will. They had to obey Whites' orders.

In the same vein, we realised that slaves confronted physical and moral violence. However, Whites were like small gods in front of Blacks. Slaves were insulted, beaten, and sometimes killed like animals. Injustice, exploitation, oppression and whippings were their daily diet. Also, slaves were sold and bought like mere merchandise. The worse was that their families were separated, children from parents, husbands from wives, things were falling apart. In addition, the food they were given was to prevent them from dying and not to nourish them either. As portrayed by Mark Twain through his novel, *Adventures of Huckleberry*

*Finn*, White people were cruel towards Black ones, and the latter were the wretched of the earth.

We also realised that Mark Twain became conscious that Blacks were also human beings. He changed his mind from pro-slavery to anti-slavery, so he became the breaker of all sorts of racial barriers. To do so, and in order to help other people who had the spirit of becoming brothers, Mark Twain created a character, a small White boy named Huck Finn, who befriended a slave man, Jim. The two lived in Jackson's island like a father and a son. Huck assumed all consequences in helping Jim to run away from slavery. Through the character of Huck Finn, Mark Twain succeeded to call the attention of other pro-slavery Whites, and finally changed the whole American society in a free state for everybody, both Whites and Blacks.

By demonstrating all this, our intention was to prove the impact of slavery on Blacks because of their skin and the way to follow in order to live in peace as brothers are supposed to do. Moreover, after we have demonstrated this, we cannot claim that we have exhausted all the issues related to racism. This research paves a way to other researchers to know more in examining the worse of slavery and the better of breaking racial barriers. We wish them to explore some issues, such as slavery and race as two tools of human division. They may find a way of dealing with race's barriers.

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