

## Chapter II

### RACE AGAINST RACISM IN CANADA

*As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods,*

*They kill us for their sport*            (King Lear IV, i: 36)

Racism in any form is undesirable and goes against democratic principles. There have been protests against the practice of racism in the western world. The focus of this chapter is on the issues raised by African Caribbean Canadian Women writers like Claire Harris, Nourbese Marlene Philip and Dionne Brand against racism in Canada through the medium of their powerful prose and poetry. They raise their dissent against racial discriminations in Canada. Their race against racism has created a literature of difference.

Racism can mean different things to different people depending on the meaning they want to attach to the term 'racism'. It is an irony to use 'racism' as a cover term to segregate human beings. Dionne Brand and Kriśantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta in *Rivers Have Sources, Trees Have Roots: Speaking of Racism* document the view of the non-white people on racism. One of their narrators describes racism in Canada in the following words:

In a superficial level, racism can be described as one race against another. At the institutional level, it can be when people of colour with the same qualification as a white person are denied jobs. To me, though, it is more than that - it is a kind of ideology. It's a certain way you believe something. You believe it, not just superficially, but as a scientific action. This law says that the superiority of white people is interpreted through culture, through history and social science. They justify this pseudo-science. They try to prove it all the time. This is racism. (45-46)

Before we discuss 'racism', it is necessary to examine the word 'race' from which the term 'racism' is derived. "Race" is a group of people of a common descent or origin. In a broad sense the whole humankind is a race: human race. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* defines "race" as (i) "a group of people with the same history, language, customs etc. (ii) one of a number of divisions of human beings each with a different type of body – the black, the white, the brown race". In his article, "The Term Racism and Discourse" Charles Sarvan defines the term "race" as

a group connected by common descent or origin; a tribe, nation or people regarded as of common stock; a group of several tribes or peoples, forming a distinct ethnic stock [notions of a great Aryan race and Nazism?]; one of the great divisions of humankind having certain physical peculiarities in common; humankind, as distinct from animals.

According to David Lowenthal "race is a social artefact" (qtd. in Sarvan). Eric Foner also reinforces the same idea by stating that "race is invented or socially constructed" (qtd. in Sarvan). Sarvan argues, "though race does not exist, racism most certainly does". Today "racism" is commonly understood as the antagonism that one group of people feels for another. "Ethnicity" is often used as a synonym for "race". However around the time of World War II, the term ethnicity was applied to groups thought to be inferior, such as Jews, Italians and the Irish. Hence it can be defined as an aspect of relations between groups where at least one part sees itself as being culturally distinctive and superior. In the article "Where Have All the Natives Gone" Rey Chow defines racism as "the reduction of someone from a particular group to the stereotypes, negative or positive, we have of that group" (Mongia 122). The feeling of reducing someone to the stereotype is the result of one's feeling of oneself as different from the others. Europeans do not expect non-Europeans to have certain qualities. The Eurocentric attitude discards 'Others' as non-significant entities. Rey Chow describes an incident, which is an example of European superiority complex. It shows how Europeans consider themselves superior to non-Europeans. Claude Levi-Strauss doing his 'fieldwork' in New York on American ethnology, was troubled by the sight of a feathered Indian with a Parker pen in the New York Public Library reading room where he was doing research for his *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Mongia 122- 3). For Levi-Strauss the American Indian is a 'subaltern' to use Gayatri Spivak's term (Nelson and Grossberg 308 qtd. in Mongia 127); the Indian does not deserve a Parker pen and a public place. He cannot be seen outside his 'subaltern' existence that is now extinct (Clifford

James 246 qtd in Mongia 123). It is the same feeling of superiority of his race that prompted Thomas Babington Macaulay to say that “ a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia” (Clive and Pinney 241 qtd. in Edward Chamberlin 77).

Reasons for the divisions of human beings can be many. According to Sarvan there are *linguoracism* based on language and *religoracism* based on different religions or sects of the same religion. There are also divisions of human beings based on ethnicity and culture as well as colour and class. But the kind of prejudice that has disturbed the humankind is the discrimination, exclusion and division of human beings on the basis of the colour of their skin. Divisions on the basis of creed and caste, as well as region and language may not immediately be visible as the one based on the colour of the skin. The main battle line in the west that divides the people of African origin from the Whites is the colour.

The term ‘race’ is presently used to refer to the colour prejudice, which the Europeans have against the Africans. It is not possible to hide the colour of one’s skin. It is the colour of the skin that decides racial discrimination. Cornel West an African-American writer equates racial discrimination with colour prejudice in his work *Race Matters*. A character in Romesh Gunsekara’s novel *The Sandglass* expresses the same view: ‘In this country [England], it is my skin [colour] that people notice, that goes in front of me everywhere [...] Everything else follows to fit’ (qtd. in Sarvan). The kind of discrimination based on the pigment of one’s skin refers to feelings, attitudes and behaviour that arise from an imagined and

unscientific notion of 'race' because racism in the West is "primarily predicated on colour, the visually immediate and most important dividing marker".

It is a fact that prejudice based on the colour of one's skin in the West is due to colonialism. V. G. Kiernan writes in his *The Lords of Human Kind* "it was colonial power and control which made white the distinguishing feature that it has come to be. Being white became an important element in the western collective consciousness, and white people, vis-à-vis non-whites, gave the impression, to themselves as to outsiders, of being one race". Sarvan adds "not only colonialism and imperial rule, but the slave trade in Africa and after its abolition, the use of Asian indentured labour, strengthened white assumptions and attitudes".

In Canada ethnic and racial differences are addressed as a question of identity rather than of history and politics. People who have their own selfish motives have created racial differences in the world. Europeans divided the human beings into different categories and placed themselves on top and others on the ladder in a descending order. In his book *Multiculturalism and the History of Canadian Diversity* Richard J. F. Day writes that the term "race" is used to describe ethnic origin of peoples defined on the basis of certain common physical features. Examples are the classification of Whites or Caucasians, South Asians, Blacks, Chinese or South East Asians (190). It is the division between Europeans and non-Europeans that has created problems in the West for the Blacks. Therefore the non-Whites have no identity of their own and they are the 'others' and belong to the margin with regard to economic, literary, social and political opportunities.

Physical appearances and common traits of human beings generally determine the race of a group of people. When “race” and “racism” are confused, it results in a chaotic division of human beings. The racist theories hold the view that there is a causal link between inherited physical traits and certain traits of personality, intellect, or culture and that some races are inherently superior to others. Anti-Semitism and Apartheid are just two examples of present predilections prevalent in some society. One of the most influential thinkers on racism was the French writer and diplomat Josphe-Arthur, comte de Gobineau. In his four volume book *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* (1853-55) Gobineau taught the superiority of the white race over all others, and, among the whites, of the Aryans as having reached the heights of civilization.

The *Essay* advanced the theory that the fate of civilization is determined by racial composition, that Aryan societies flourish as long as they remain free of black and yellow strains, and that the more a civilization’s racial character is diluted through miscegenation, the more likely it is to lose its vitality and creativity and sink into corruption and immorality. (Macro Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol. IX 881).

Gobineau’s most important follower Houston Chamberlain “insisted on the superiority of the Teutons, whom he characterized physically as being the most part tall, fair and dolichocephalic (long headed) that is to say corresponding to Nordic tribes” (Macro Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol. IX 881). For some people there are only two races: the white and the non-white. John Wideman writes in *Fatheralong* that “race” stigmatizes non-whites only, and that whites view

themselves as raceless' (qtd. in Sarvan). On Wideman's observation Sarvan comments that "perhaps what John Wideman meant was that most Whites, consciously or not, see themselves as the norm, and all others are deviant and inferior, calibrated according to the degree of colour or more precisely, its absence" (qtd. in Sarvan). The British Colonizers took on themselves the responsibility of civilizing other 'races'. This attitude finds expression in the writings of Thomas Carlyle, James A Froude, and Charles Kingsley, and most strongly and clearly in the writings of Rudyard Kipling. Kipling, a man made of imperialism considered bringing civilization to the members of other 'races' a noble activity. Similarly, the French justified the maintenance of their colonized empire on the basis of their '*mission civilisatrice*', their duty is to bring civilization to the black peoples of the world (Macro Encyclopedia Britannica Vol. IX 881). In her essay "Managing the Unmanageable" Philip while discussing the European thought makes it clear that the Europeans recommended the managing of the "Others": Africans, Asians and the aboriginals. "At all times they must be managed" (Cudjoe 295). Europeans felt that it was a risk to leave the "Others" uncontrolled and unmanaged.

European settlers did not pay any heed to the rights or needs of native tribes both in America and Canada. When the British went to America, there were the Indians in America. Similarly Indians had been in Canada before the whites went to that part of the world. So technically the land belonged to the Indians. The Europeans did not feel that it was wrong to deprive Native people of their land and property. "When the Spaniards first came to America Francisco de Quevedo

and Juan Gine de Sepulveda and others supplied them with proper excuses for taking the land away from the Indians and treating them with complete lack of consideration. They developed the theory that the Indians had an entirely different origin from that of the Spaniards, that they were not human in the same sense, and that there was therefore no need to accord to them the same treatment as to one's fellow human beings". Spanish invasion took place in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Canada. In 1600s Spaniards began their permanent settlements. "The Spaniards tried to Christianize Native Americans and relocate them in designated areas, but the French were interested in establishing trade relations with the Indians" (Macro Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol. V 330).

Diana Brydon in her article "It's Time for a New Set of Questions" considers the act of taking away the land that belonged to native Indians, a colonial guilt, which is like a double-edged sword. She asserts:

Colonial guilt is double-edged. It combines guilt about the stealing of Native peoples' lands to form the country called Canada with insecurity about Canada's inferiority in relation to Britain and the United States. This colonial guilt requires reading beyond thematics or apparent content to explore instead the whole realm of what cannot be told or what can only be told indirectly, through slippages, contradictions, or apparent ungrammaticalities in the narrative syntax of the text. Such readings identify symptoms of unease in apparently seamless stories and find patterns of connection in apparently disparate texts. (20-21)



Charles Taylor in his book *Multiculturalism* criticizes the “guilt of the colonists”, imposition of their cultures on others in the following words: “Western liberal societies are thought to be supremely guilty in this regard, partly because of their colonial past, and partly because of their marginalization of segments of their populations that stem from other cultures” (63). In her essay, “Mapping Underground Rivers: Complicity, Racism and the Creative Process”, Ann Decter also expresses the same idea; she writes that the whites are race-conscious and they have drawn benefits by considering themselves a superior race. She discusses this issue very emphatically in the following manner:

We refuse to think of ourselves as a race, to be racialised or shifted in any way from the centre. Although we generally hide the knowledge, we know what racialization means. All the physical and economic comfort we have derives from a historical crime. Call it genocide, call it war, call it theft of a continent and its resources... Euro-Canadians continue to benefit from this history.

Racism has often smeared the mosaic of Canada with disgust, diffidence, discrimination, discord, dissent, disharmony and disunity. The ideal Canada would have been a land of beautiful landscapes and colourful people. Ann Decter further adds that Canada has always been a multi-racial and race conscious country. “Race, as an issue, arrived with the first colonizing Europeans, who brought their whiteness, their enlightenment, their concepts of humanity, derived into distinct racial categories to burden the lives of the people living here”.

In an interview published in her book Bharati Mukherji gave racism in Canada as the reason for her migration to the U. S. A. In her Introduction to *Feminist Spaces* Malashri Lal writes that the most damaging remark on racial discriminations comes from Bharati Mukherji who claims white Canadians are hostile to people born in “hot, moist continents like Asia” (xviii). Nourbese Philip echoes similar views when she writes in her *Frontiers* that

Those of us from hot, moist parts of the world (sexpositive cultures as I have recently seen them described), who work in traditions originating in our countries of origin, face the ever-present danger that our work may be considered and categorized as “different” or “exotic”. (33)

Harris in her “Mirror, Mirror on the Wall” states that the views of ethnic writers are branded as the views of “others” and their works as “exotic” (Cudjoe 307). Brand is also apprehensive of the attitude of mainstream critics towards the writings of minority writers. In an interview entitled “In the company of my work” in *The Other Woman: Women of Colour in Contemporary Canadian Literature*, Dionne Brand talks to Makeda Silvera about the Canadian tendency of discarding whatever is non- white as exotic and non standard: “I never wanted to write in so-called dialect - certainly not without first appreciating what I was doing, and that had a lot to do with finding myself in a country like Canada where everything can be turned exotic. Everything that is non-white, that is not standard” (367).

Europeans never concede to give Africa the status the people of Africa think is their right. They are never ready to accept Africa as the centre of western civilization. Sarvan cites Anthony Appiah who writes in his article "Africa: The Hidden History", "until about 100,000 years ago the ancestors of all modern humans lived in Africa" (66). Europeans are not happy with the theory, which says that the Europeans have originated from the African woman. *The Times of India* (Ahmedabad edn. col.1, p.9) carried the news of a research report titled "European men's lineage traced to Asia: Researchers". The report was first published in *The Washington Post*. According to an international team of researchers most European men have descended from a handful of primitive hunters who migrated from Central Asia to Europe between 25,000 and 40,000 years ago. The team of researchers, led by Ornella Semino of the University of Pavia in Italy, arrived at the conclusion after examining genetic material from the Y-chromosomes of 1,007 men across Europe and the Middle East to determine the lineage of present-day Europeans. "The results are sure to please White men, who were rather unhappy at the results of an earlier study which deduced that all Whites, Blacks, Browns and Reds evolved from one African woman, who is the Mother of all" concludes the report.

In their writings, Claire Harris, Marlene Nourbese Philip and Dionne Brand criticize Canadian society for its racist attitude. Though from the Caribbean, they have lived in Canada for more than 30 years now. But they are still not considered Canadians. Harris strongly believes that the refusal of the Western World to acknowledge Africa makes its influence more potent. According to

Harris to consider 'Others' as satellite communities to the larger central community is not in the right direction. In her essay "Why Do I Write?" Harris writes that the culture captured by capitalism can not impose itself as the host culture. According to her it is an infection and hence it is necessary for Africa and for the South to protect themselves against this infection. "Thus the five-hundred-year marginalization of Africans in the diaspora, and of Africa itself" (Morrell 29). The trend continues in Canada. An African in Canada is always on the receiving end of the worst excesses of barbarism as he was during the most inhuman practice of slave trade and the colonial subjugation of Africans in their own land. One of the narrators in *Rivers Have Sources, Trees Have Roots* says that "Racism is blatant" (Brand & Bhaggiyadatta 45).

In "Why do I write?" Harris makes her intentions for writing very clear. She quotes George Orwell according to whom in <sup>a</sup>tropical landscape the natives are <sub>1</sub>not important, their colour is the same as that of the earth. So when the Europeans visit Asia and Africa, they are not interested in the natives. According to Harris there is a vast gulf between moral and social philosophies in the western world. Harris feels that her task is the reinscription of Africa on the western consciousness because the westerners have discarded Africa as a 'Black Continent' and as a land of primitives. However today the whole world knows that Africans have influenced every aspect of contemporary culture of the U. S., which is equated with "modern". In her "Ole Talk: A Sketch" Harris reiterates "African-Americans have produced Jazz; Afro-Trinidadians created a new orchestral instrument" (Scheier et. al. 133).

Harris migrated to Canada in 1966 to teach English and drama at a Catholic School in Calgary. During her year long leave for the period of 1974-75, she joined the University of Nigeria in Lagos for her Diploma in Mass Media and Communications. According to Harris the stay and study there was enriching: Nigeria's "entirely different culture forced me to pay attention" and this made her realize that her task as a writer is "to return Africa to its place at the centre, the heart of Western Civilization". Her stay in Canada has made her aware of the fact that

Africans in North America, and of course, Europe - have suffered a traumatic loss. The nations which inflicted and continue to inflict that loss have never acknowledged their crime, nor have they ever been contrite. There can, of course, be no healing while one group continues to see the other as inherently less than acceptable. There is no acceptance of our joint inheritance, no recognition of the scar tissue embroidering it. (Morrell 28)

Harris further states that she wants to examine what is meant by human in the context of social and economic, the historical and environmental fractures we have constructed over the last five hundred years. Harris painfully brings to the fore the events that followed the abolition of slavery. In her essay "Why Do I Write?" Harris writes, "Britain secured all compensation both legal and financial to slave owners for the "wrong" done them" (Morrell 28). In her *No Language is Neutral* Brand writes that she hated bankers: 'Look / I hated something, policeman, bankers, slavetraders, / shhh ...still do and even more these days"

(31). In her *Bread Out of Stone* Brand gives the reason for her dislike of bankers: banks made money insuring slaves as cargo: “‘Lloyds Bank’ got their bullish start insuring slave cargo” (22).

In the same essay Harris explodes the myth of the North – South in the West. In a very sarcastic tone she tries to dispel the misconception of the people on the same: “The North is up, like heaven/ goodness/ light/ a preserving cool. The South is down, like hell/ morally ambiguous/ dark/ a corrupting heat” (Morrell 29).

She explains that in this round planet the South has to be under the North, the true north. Those who control the world economy have to be taught that for geographical reasons the North cannot exist without the South and the South cannot exist without the North. The North and the South are like the two sides of the same coin. One exists because of the other and makes the other possible and it is impossible for one to exist without the other. Harris wants to displace the notion that the South and its people are not integral to modern Western Civilization: “This continent after all is the true heart of darkness. Here capitalism ... inscribed forever the African presence onto the frozen heart of Europe, using slavery, bound labour, and colonization as its chisel” (Morrell 30).

It is true that some people became capitalists or some nations became rich at the cost of the hard work of others. The capitalists or the rich nations have plundered the land of the less fortunate ones and meted out to them inhuman treatment or made them slaves and treated them worse than the beasts. Harris continues,

Africa became the body· here viewed as slow, stupid, seamy, sensual, strong, slobbish of the soil; Europe became the mind· free, source of all genuine (i e. scientific) creativity and knowledge, and – to distinguish it from clearly rich and dazzling native cultures - font of high (that is, real) culture'. [ . . .] The profound marginalization of peoples of the South in North America and Europe, and of Africa in the world, springs from notions like these (Morrell 30-31)

Harris shows her dissent at the western practice of succumbing human beings of the third world countries to experiments using them as guinea pigs. Experiments are carried out first in the third world countries. When new products especially drugs and medicines manufactured in the West and are to be introduced there, they are tested in the third world countries. When a product is banned in the West, it is often dumped in the third world. In *Dipped in Shadows*, Claire Harris sympathizes with Africans and other non-whites who have to carry the white man's burden. In a moving narrative Harris gives a personal touch to her expression:

my sisters the white mans  
burden is still borne  
on the backs of  
Africans Asians  
Aboriginal peoples  
Women children

the bearing enforced by fists and bombs  
in such a mind  
subjugation is gift  
in such a mind  
the mutilation of peoples planet skies  
in such a mind

AIDS? (Atlanta: culture of vaccine in monkey's blood to be tested in Central Africa?) the cigarette's cancer chemical abuse and shifted nuclear wastes new greeds dead Romany Jews Palestinians in such a mind lost graces decencies knowledge bled resources the common humanity shattered into us and them

the curved ribs of starvelings  
a small thing  
in such a mind  
a very small thing . (56)

In her essay "Why Do I Write?" Harris reminds us of the British style of experimenting in the colonies, how they tried to teach their own literature with students in India and later applied in England:

The study of novels, plays, poetry was first established in India in the early nineteenth century by colonial administrators in an attempt at ideological pacification. When it was seen to work it was then brought back to England for similar purposes in the British population. Thus we owe English literature studies, possibly all modern literary studies, to



colonialism and the need to propagate the notion of effortless and moral Western Superiority. (Morrell 28)

From this it is clear that even the literature of the colonists had to be popularized by the colonized in the colonies. It was in the early nineteenth century that the British took the help of those whom they colonized to popularize their literature. Harris has been very active in promoting Canadian literature to Canadians through her project "Poetry Goes Public". Under this project poetry posters by major poets were circulated in public places. Poetry posters were also put up on buses for the public to read. Harris motivated this as a member of the Writers' Guild of Alberta. Harris is very clear that Canada and the western culture do not accept marginalized literature. But still Canada and other Western cultures show reluctance to accept 'Immigrant Literature, Writing by Women of Colour, Feminist Writing, Political literature, Postcolonial Literature and New Literature in English (Morrell 28).

Dionne Brand expresses the stateless state of her existence in Canada very strongly in her *Chronicles of the Hostile Sun*. According to her it is the racial discrimination in Canada that has refused to acknowledge her existence there. Though she has lived in Canada since 1970, she still feels stateless there because the majority community does not want to accept the minority communities as part of the Canadian citizenry.

I am not a refugee,

I have my papers,

. . .

I have a Canadian passport,  
I have lived here all my adult life,  
I am stateless anyway (70)

Brand criticizes the notion of universality in creative writing: "In fact, I'm wary of appeals to universality. It seems to me that only works written by writers who are not white are called upon to prove or provide universality" (Kambourelli 407- 8)

The works of the majority are considered to be within the framework of "universality" because the majority writers belong to the "polis" - the centre of power. Therefore it is not necessary for the majority writers to prove that their works are within the framework of "universality". Western society and mainstream writers refuse to accept the literature of "Others" as universal. In her "Ole Talk: A Sketch", Harris deplores that many in Canada have 'internalized Conrad's "heart of darkness" attitude' which springs from 'fear and ignorance' (Scheier et al. 137). Mainstream writers are ignorant of other cultures and though they reject the literary work of non-Europeans as not meeting the code "universal", 'Canadians find it hard to admit to racism'. When Europeans marginalize 'the Black writer' saying that his or her work is not "Canadian", they mean that the work is not "European". According to Philip " . . .the so-called universal values were really a cover for imperialistic modes of thought and ways of acting upon the world. The patterns of culture, the images, the forms of thinking, the Literature that were being imposed around the world on different peoples were very specific to a very specific culture (Western/ European), and a very specific class within that culture- they were however propounded as universal" (Cudjoe 297)

Europeans consider whatever is alien to their culture and beyond their understanding as non-standard and marginal. Writing about the colonial concept of universality, in his article "Colonialist Criticism", Chinua Achebe questions the narrow parochial attitude of the western mindset that gives credit to western place and personal names in literature and refuses to understand those of "Others":

In the nature of things the work of a Western writer is automatically informed by universality. It is only others who must strain to achieve it. . . . I should like to see the word 'universal' banned altogether from discussions of African literature until such a time as people cease to use it as a synonym for the narrow, self serving parochialism of Europe, until their horizon extends to include all the world. (Ashcroft et al. 59- 60)

Charles Larson argues in his article "The Idea of Universality in Literature" that the idea of universality should not be restricted to include only the western view of literature or the status of universality should not be considered the prerogative of only the western writer:

What is important, it seems to me, is that when we read a piece of non-Western literature we realize that the interpretation we make of it may be widely different from what the artist intended, and contrarily, that we should not expect people who are not of our own culture and heritage to respond in the same way that we do to our own literature. The time has come when we should avoid the use of the pejorative term 'universal.' What we really mean when we talk about universal experiences in

literature are cultural responses that have been shaped by our own Western Tradition. (Ashcroft et al. 65)

It is a fact that the cultural barriers can come in the way of understanding literatures based on cultures other than one's own culture. But that does not give a license to any culture to brand "Others" as inferior or the literature not universal. Larson further writes, "The purpose of any piece of literature, no matter what culture it was produced in, is to show us something we are previously unaware of. Just as literature is a bridge connecting a life lived with a life not lived, so, too, all literature that is effective is a voyage into previously untraveled world" (Ashcroft et al. 65).

Problems of race and colour Harris, Philip and Brand raise in their writings are woven around the realms that go beyond Canada and the Caribbean and engulf global themes. In the article "Entering Our Own Ignorance: Subject-Object Relations in Commonwealth Literature", Flemming Brahms cites A. L. McLeod who writes in his introduction to *The Commonwealth Pen*, "Mere race and colour problems never produce good literature. These problems have to become submerged in more universal themes . . . genuine human attributes and human and universal values" (Ashcroft et al. 67- 68) give a piece of writing universal appeal

Europeans consider Africans as primitive and non-civilized human beings. Brand takes objection to the calling of African people "primitive" in her poem *Primitive*

*Offensive* (1982). She races her voice against the brutalities of racism perpetuated in the past and ~~is~~ being continued in the present by the civilized world.

When a writer is refused the right to publish, s/he is deprived of the freedom of his/her imagination. Harris narrates problems that Black writers have to face in Canada to publish their works in "Ole Talk: A Sketch", "To deny an artist, or any one, the full use of his imagination and empathy is to deny our humanity. Probably self-defeating anyhow. But Blacks have to depend on whites for publication, review and dissemination" (Scheier et al. 138). Publishers in Canada rejected the works of Harris, Philip and Brand saying that their writings were not Canadian enough. In 1987 Philip sent her manuscripts of *She Tries Her Tongue*, *Her silence softly breaks* and *Looking for Livingstone: An Odyssey of Silence* to publishers. After twenty-five rejections, these manuscripts were published, in 1989 and in 1991 respectively. Ironically, the rejected manuscript *She Tries Her Tongue*, *Her silence softly breaks* after its publication won the prestigious Casa de las Americas Prize. The fact that Philip was the first anglophone woman and second Canadian to win the prize shows that the rejection by publishers was purely on grounds other than its merit. Then the reason for rejection could only be that she is not a mainstream writer.

Similarly her novel for young people, *Harriet's Daughter* was originally published in England because Canadian publishers rejected it. Nourbese Philip in conversation with Janice Williamson reveals that Canadian publishers refused to publish *Harriet's Daughter* because "they weren't interested in work with Black kids They did not even want to read the manuscript" (*Sounding Differences*

237). But later it appeared as a Canadian publication, and was a finalist for the Canadian Library Association Book of the year award for Children's Literature, The City of Toronto Book Awards, and the Max and Greta Ebel Memorial Award. Similarly Harris narrates her experience with publishers in Canada in "Ole Talk: A Sketch":

Look I'm walking a tightrope here, this is a high wire act. One of the real difficulties is the problem of group pressure. This is particularly important in a society in which the powers that be would prefer to simply marginalize the Black writer, as not being "Canadian," Canadian being European in such a definition. I have twice been asked by publishers to submit work, but "we want stuff written in Canada. I mean set in Canada." That is code for that deemed "universal". At the same time Canadians find it very hard to admit to racism. (Scheier et al. 137)

In another section of "Ole Talk: A Sketch", Harris makes it clear that there are many Black writers in Canada. She says that seventy-two Black writers have contributed in three anthologies. The conversation brings to the fore the fact that there are economic constraints to publish writings of minority writers. It is very difficult for a Black writer to get government funding to publish her/his creative works in Canada. "[...] economies of scale make it difficult to publish minority writers. This is an absurdity that presupposes that Canadians are all so racist, and so provincial that they would refuse to read the books of minority groups" (Scheier et al. 140).

The racist mindset of the majority community in Canada does not allow them (whites) to make any attempt to consider the ethnic minorities as part of the social fabric of Canada. There is no sincere effort on the part of the government to integrate these people into the main stream. The racist attitude does not permit them to do this. For Harris, Philip and Brand a writer is a contributor to dissecting these internal contradictions and conflicts. Philip in an interview in *Sounding Differences: Conversations with Seventeen Canadian Women Writers* says, "I believe as James Baldwin said, my job as a writer is to disturb the status quo" (Williamson 244).

The reaction of Harris to racism emerges very vividly in her poem "Policeman Cleared in Jaywalking Case" in *Fables From The Women's Quarters* in which she shows her surprise at the racist behaviour of the law enforcers of Canada. The girl was arrested, strip-searched and jailed in the adult detention centre for a silly mistake and the policeman was acquitted. According to an eye witness to the street incident the girl was "terrified". According to the policeman, the girl committed a crime and therefore she was arrested.

The city policeman who arrested a  
juvenile girl for jaywalking March 11,  
has been cleared of any wrong doing by  
the Alberta law enforcement appeal  
board

The case was taken to the law enforcement appeal board after the girl was arrested, strip-searched and jailed in the adult detention centre.

The Police officer contended the girl had not cooperated during the first five minutes after she was stopped, had failed to produce identification with a photo of herself on it, and had failed to give the policeman her date of birth. (*Fables 37*)

The action of the policeman terrified the eye witness because the policeman did this to that girl though "The girl handed the officer bus pass containing her name, address, phone number, her school, school address and phone number" (*Fables 37*).

Harris identifies herself with the fifteen year old girl and shares her suffering by saying, "I signify" which means, "I acknowledge" in the black community. Harris says that the inhuman racist attitude towards the black has been going on for three hundred years She feels as if she underwent the humiliating and dehumanizing experience herself.

Look you, child, I signify    three hundred years in swarm around me this  
thing I must    this uneasy thing    myself the other stripped down to skin  
and sex    to stand    to stand and say    to stand and say before you all



the child was black and female and therefore mine . . . Observe now this  
harsh world full of white works or so you see us and it is white white  
washed male and dangerous even to you full of white fire white heavens  
white words and it swings in small circles around you so you see it  
and here I stand black and female bright black on the edge of this white  
world and I will not blend in nor will I fade into the midget shades  
peopling your dream (*Fables* 38)

Harris draws a comparison between the police in Canada and in the Caribbean. While narrating an incident in Trinidad in which a fifteen year old girl was helped by a native policeman, Harris succeeds in drawing the attention of the world to the inhuman attitude of the police to the Blacks in Canada by contrasting the treatment of the blacks by the European police and the black police:

[. . .] a policeman bends into my blank gaze “where it hurting yuh? Tell me” his rough hand under my neck then seeing me whole “stand up, let me help yuh” ...then the policeman suddenly stern “what your name, girl?” ... I struck dumb dumb ...”tell me what’s your name?...” But I was released with a smile with sympathy sent on in the warm green morning. (*Fables* 39)

When the similar incident occurs twenty years later in Edmonton, the writer identifies herself with the black girl who underwent the inhuman torture. It was a different experience in Trinidad. The policeman helps the girl to come out of the

trauma she experienced. He solves the problem with a smile and by giving a helping hand. But it is different in Edmonton.

Harris uses the expression “white washed” for the Whites. Though she does not add the word “tombs” to the expression “white washed”, what she means here is clear. Harris means that every white person is a “white washed tomb” and their appearance is deceiving because they don’t practise what they preach. There is a reference to The New Testament here; Jesus calls the Pharisees white washed tombs: “How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look fine on the outside but are full of bones and decaying corpses on the inside. In the same way, on the outside you appear good to everybody, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and sins” (Mtt. 23: 27-8).

Most often the European policemen are acquitted in cases involving black people. This happens not only in Canada, but also in America and other western countries. In the ‘Introduction’ to her *Frontiers*, Philip reports the case of Rodney King, an African American and states that “now internationally “famous” because the incident drew international attention. In May 1992 white police officers charged with assaulting Rodney King were acquitted. In response to the verdict there were riots in Los Angeles. The repercussions were felt in Toronto where riots broke out in May 1992 (11).

In her *No Language Is Neutral* Brand also writes that she hates policemen because they are racist. ‘Look / I hated something, policeman, ... / shhh ...still

do and even more these days" (31). Brand writes about the encounters between the Canadian police and the drug dealers in the part of Toronto where she lives:

Here, the police carry out this country's legacy of racial violence in two killings of Black men and one shooting of a young Black woman in this city that calls its racism subtle and the air stinks with the sanguine pronouncements of Canadian civility: "Oh no, we're not like the United States," be grateful for the not- as-bad racism here. I'm writing this just after the massacre of fourteen women in Montreal and the apologies "madman," "aberration," in a country where most violent deaths of women are the result of male violence. (*Bread Out of Stone* 9-10)

In a hard hitting criticism of racism in Canada, Brand writes that there is a "pathological hate" of Native People by the white law and white law enforcers which are capable of acquitting white men of their crimes against the Black people (*Bread Out of Stone* 10). Harris, Philip and Brand express their displeasure over the racist attitude of the police in their writings. Philip writes in her *Frontiers*, "Racism is a determining factor in the brutal and deadly confrontation between the police and African Canadians..." (12).

*Rivers Have Sources, Trees Have Roots: Speaking of Racism* by Brand and Bhaggiyadatta is an oral record of encounters of people with the racist Canadians in various facets of their lives in Canada. One of the narrators recorded gives an account of the unfriendly and unhelpful treatment of a Canadian cop, which in

fact reinforces the accounts of Claire Harris in "Policeman Cleared in Jaywalking Case" on the same subject:

I remember once when I was little, I was walking to school and crossed a crosswalk. There was this cop who was directing the cross walk (that was before they had cross guards). I was running because I was going to be late for school, and this cop saw me running. He let a few white kids ahead of him cross the street, and they were just two steps away from me, but he stopped me. He said, "Nobody runs through my cross walk ". Now he didn't really make a racist statement, but at the time even though I was thirteen years old, I felt he had. He wasn't being friendly. He had just let a whole bunch of kids cross, but he stopped me when he saw me running.

(55)

Harris also writes about the police brutality in Canada in her "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall" (*Caribbean Women Writers*). The following account reinforces the fact that such insults to the Blacks occur again and again. An immigrant businessman has had an arm broken while he was being forced into the police car though he did not resist arrest. He was only trying to get assurances from the police concerning his two children, both under ten, who were in the back of his car. The judge blames the police stating that their behaviour was unacceptable. The editor of Herald also said that the behaviour of the police was un-Canadian (Cudjoe 307).

In her essay "Managing the Unmanageable" (Cudjoe 295 - 300), Philip writes how the Whites think about the Blacks. The Blacks belong to the "Other" that is irrational, bad, evil and unmanageable. Therefore the Whites presumed that it was their responsibility to control and manage the Blacks. This led to the slave trade that remained a blot on the human race till Abraham Lincoln (1809- 65) stepped in to abolish it. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863 of freeing slaves was enforced in Confederate States of America. However slavery was abolished totally by the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution in December 1865. Slavery was abolished in much of Europe in early 19<sup>th</sup> c. It was declared illegal in Britain in 1807 and outlawed in 1833.

Slave trade is a dehumanizing activity. It is a racist ideology developed to rationalize such mass cruelty and inhumanity. Such ideologies become shared and transmitted over generations. Anti-Black racism is a direct extension of colonial and slave relations. According to those relations a Black person was seen to be animal - like, less than human, having different abilities and skills and hence Europeans considered the Blacks inferior to them.

Since 1400 Portuguese sailors have attempted to capture Africans and sell them as house servants. In the process of colonization and settlement Native Peoples were, subjected to violence, destruction, disease and death. The first slave landed in Quebec in 1628. The first slave trade developed in the 1500s and continued until about 1807 when Britain declared slavery illegal. But the slave trade shattered and battered the Africans who received the worst inhuman treatment in

the history of humankind. Harris, Philip and Brand raise their voices against slavery and the atrocities against their race.

In her *Translation Into Fiction*, Harris refers to the slave trade where human beings were transported like goods and traded like animals “I do not know your name    you came captive in folds of jute and I bargained for you    stuck my fingers between wooden teeth    caressed your elephant ears    examined the hollow back    then paid” (23). Spaces between words are deliberate. They underlie the prolonged pain caused due to the inhuman treatment of Africans by slave traders and masters. People from Africa were brought <sup>d</sup>huddled like cattle in boats and ships to be sold. The prospective slave trader would examine the teeth of the person to ascertain the age and strength of the slave as in the case of a horse and also check the other parts of the body for physical strength before paying for the slave.

*The Conception of Winter*, a poem by Claire Harris is based on a journey to Spain and is set against a background of the historical knowledge of slave ships which set out from Barcelona. In this poem, dream, racial memory, identification of the narrating “i” with a woman taken in slavery, and street images merge into a perpetual but fruitless search for “the hand of god”. The whole idea of inheritance is ironically dealt with here. One inherits property or wealth from one’s parents or ancestors. The narrator in Harris’ *Drawing Down a Daughter* warns the unborn child of the reality of the world in which she will be born. As her parents were slaves, she will inherit the same and be a slave herself. Here Harris tells the daughter in *Drawing Down a Daughter* she will inherit an entire

history of slavery, of West Indian Cookery, Social relations, and mythology, and of the relationship of her parents and the story of her sojourn in Canada.

In the short story "Whose Idea Was It Anyway?" Philip analyses the premises of European exploration and colonization. She identifies pride, greed, Christianity, and racism as the reasons for the whites to colonize the Blacks. If Christianity was a mission of the European exploration of Africa, the whites failed to practise what they preached. Therefore the metaphor of Harris calling the whites "white washed" is very significant. Philip terms the idea of discriminating <sup>against</sup> ~~the~~ human beings on the basis of colour of the skin and making them slaves "a diabolical plan" and she is sure that it has come from a European who is really a genius but "generations of sons and daughters would curse him ..." (Morrell 152). In a very <sup>trenchant</sup> criticism of the idea of slavery, Philip observes that some would call the person who invented the idea "blessed – a genius". Philip sarcastically compares the invention of slavery with great inventions and ideas in the world like those of Archimedes, Newton, Galileo, Copernicus and Descartes (151- 2). She feels that it is very strange that others also had the same idea at the same time. The European might have said, "I have an idea" – "I have a dream... in which I saw thousand ships ... at anchor ... under sail..." (Morrell 152). The idea was to obtain cheap source of labour and to convert the Africans from human beings to beasts.

Europeans who conceived the idea did not care if the slaves died on their journey to the land of their torture. Philip explains how some of the slaves died on their way to their destination. For others the life in slave chattels was as good as death

in life. Philip sarcastically looks at the whole idea of human beings being hurdled in a ship meant for non-human cargo; the same ship will carry “hundred weights of sugar, tobacco and tons of slaves”. Philip uses the metaphor “entomb” to suggest that the ship will be like a graveyard with several tombs to hold dead bodies. “The bowels of each sailing ship designed for non human cargo would entomb approximately three hundred Africans per voyage in their own stench and filth . . . “ (Morrell 154).

It will sail the Atlantic: from Liverpool to the Gold Coast to the Caribbean. According to estimates fifteen million Africans were brought across the Atlantic. The value that the slave traders attached to human beings is very clear from the following speech of the genius who invented this idea: “Gentlemen, we estimate that on each voyage some of your cargo will be lost – .. we can more than recover all of our expenses through our price per chattel at the auction block... when selecting Black ivory ... choose the fittest and strongest...” (Morrell 154).

Europeans wanted to populate the vast land of Canada with the blacks and they were convinced that only the labour of the Africans could transform the new land: “There is nothing which contributes more to the development of the colonies and the cultivation of their soil than the laborious toil of the Negroes- Negro slaves are the strength and sinews of our New World” (Morrell 155).

Slave traders and those who wanted to Christianize African slaves knew their scripture well. Europeans were sure that once African slaves were Christianized, “we can no longer enslave them” (Morrell 156). Philip narrates the incident in



which one hundred twenty of the five hundred died in one night when they were transported from Cape Verde to New Spain because

they packed them like pigs or even worse, all below decks, where their very breath and excrement ... killed them. It was indeed a just punishment from God that these brutal men who were responsible for carrying them also died. The tragedy did not end there, for before they reached New Mexico almost three hundred died. (158-9)

Brand reinforces her view in her *Bread Out of Stone*: "Listen, I am a Black woman whose ancestors were brought to a new world lying tightly packed in ships. Fifteen million of them survived the voyage, five million of them women; millions among them died, were killed, committed suicide" (21).

Under slavery Black women worked in physical, backbreaking work, similar to their male counterparts. <sup>They were</sup> She was beaten harshly and dehumanized like Black men. Black women were subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence by their slave masters. The slave master decided on all marriages among his slaves. He separated his slaves: husbands, wives and children were put in different slave camps. In her *No Language is Neutral* Brand describes painfully the conditions in which black women lived under slavery and how cruelly the white masters or their employers treated them:

There it was anyway, some damn memory half-eaten  
and half hungry. To hate this, they must have been  
dragged through the Manzanilla spitting out the last

spun syllables for cruelty, new sound forming,  
pushing toward lips made to bubble blood.

. . .

Take what I tell you. When  
these barracks held slaves between their stone  
halters, talking was left for night and hush was idiom  
and hot core. (23)

In *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*, Nourbese Philip criticizes the Europeans for imposing their own rules. Philip mourns the irony of depriving Africans of naming their own children. A child acquires its identity only when it receives its name and the parents generally name their own children. But “in the New World after the destruction of the native peoples, Africans would be renamed with the name of the stranger” (*She Tries Her Tongue* 21). Philip claims that slaves did not have the right to name even their children.

Philip describes shockingly the racist attitude of the Whites towards the Blacks. Europeans always wished to annihilate the Blacks by destroying their culture and community as well as their body and mind. A black man can be shot dead for no reason because he is an immigrant and black and hence he is considered worthless; his nonexistence is not a cause of concern for anyone. The broken syntax and the disregard to prosodic features of this powerfully worded poem clearly reveal the dying body and painful soul of the black man who is shot for no reason. Brand really depicts the predicament of the Blacks in the world of the Whites.

bury him  
in a plain pine coffin  
and repeat after me  
how bad he was because,  
because he was  
just another immigrant  
I say repeat  
after me  
he deserve to die  
because he didn't learn our ways  
the ways of death  
repeat  
after me blackman dead, blackman dead  
blackman dead (*Thorns*).  
.  
.  
.  
I say repeat ... Blackman dead  
black roses for blackman dead (*Thorns*)

The last stanza is repeated: "I say repeat ... Blackman dead". The last line is very significant 'black roses for blackman dead'. These lines of Philip reveal her strong dissent and anger against the death wish of the whites for Africans. They want to see the African dead because he is an immigrant and doesn't belong to the land where he lives. A blackman's death does not make any significant difference to the existence of the whites.

A blackman is not of any worth to the Europeans. Philip sarcastically incorporates Dr Broca's argument about human brain and parodies it in her "Discourse On The Logic Of Language". Even the brain of "others" is depicted differently and Philip is very acerbic about the description:

Dr Broca believed the size of the human brain determined intelligence, he devoted much of his time to "proving" that white males of the Canadian race had larger brains than, and therefore superior to women, Blacks and other peoples of colour. (*She Tries Her Tongue* 57)

*Rivers Have Sources, Trees Have Roots: Speaking of Racism* by Brand and Bhaggiyadatta record a narrator's horrifying and shocking experience that reveals how Europeans hate the very presence of Africans in Canada:

One of the worst incidents that I've ever experienced was the day I was walking on the street with my daughter who was about ten years old. This woman just walked up to her and spat on her. My first reaction was to grab her by the neck, but when I saw my daughter's face, the shock on her face, I just went back to her and put my arms around her wiped her off. I sang out to the woman, "never mind, when next the leaves fall you won't be here to enjoy them." That's all I could do. That happened in the sixties when we were going to meetings and involved in demonstrations all over the place, and yet it happened. We were not ready. I was not ready. You are never ready for that kind of scene. I put my arm around my daughter. She was trembling. I told her to remember that she was the best person in

the whole world and that there would always be people like that woman.

(71)

It is very humiliating to anyone to be treated as inferior. When an immigrant is treated less than a human being in an alien land, it becomes very hard for the immigrant to adjust to the new environment, society, culture and racist attitudes in the land of migration. In her "Ole Talk: A Sketch" Harris also expresses the idea when she raises the following question through one of the participants in the conversation: "Wa yuh know bout wa it feel like to be man? Especially man in this culture?" (Scheier et al. 135). Though the minority migrants try hard to adjust in the new environment, the racist attitude of the majority community makes the life of the minority miserable.

Racism has penetrated into every sphere of life in Canada. In her *No Language Is Neutral*, Brand writes about the landlords and authorities who are race conscious: 'the race conscious landlords and their jim crow flats' (31). Poor quality houses and schools are built for immigrants and ethnic minorities. There are jim crow laws to deal with minority communities and there is jim crow treatment to ethnic minorities in Canada.

Europeans in Canada do not allow the Blacks to belong to the Canadian society because of "the subtle but systemic racism". Racism in Canada is based on the colour of the skin. Linda Hutcheon clearly expresses the attitude of Canadian policy; there is no one rule for the people of different origin; there are two standards and a double policy. There is a special standard for the majority

community and a different standard for the blacks and other ethnic groups: "Doubleness... is the essence of immigrant experience. Caught between two worlds, the immigrant negotiates a new social space; caught between two cultures and often languages, the writer negotiates a new literary space" (9).

Writers like Harris, Philip and Brand are interested in bringing about some social change through their writing. They feel that their personal experiences are also the experience of others. The treatment they receive because of the colour of their skin is not addressed to them alone, but all those who have come from Africa are treated in the same manner by the whites. In their writing, Harris, Philip, and Brand take strong exceptions to the racial attitude of Canadian society. Western society boasts about the freedom of speech. But according to Philip the ideology of racism is an offshoot of the freedom of the individual. However the attempt of the western mind is to exclude any discussion on racism which according to Philip is a racist attitude. In her article "The Disappearing Debate" Philip writes,

To those who would argue that, in a democracy, everyone has the right to write from any point of view, I would contend that for far too long certain groups have not had access to any of the resources necessary to enable any sort of writing to take place, let alone writing from a particular point of view. Education, financial resources, belief in the validity of one's experience and reality, whether working class, female or Black: these are necessary to the production of writing (*Frontiers* 275).

Brand is against being marginalized as a writer. She blames white reviewers for their lack of sense to appreciate the literature of the Blacks and other people of colour. She is of the view that she is equally on par with other writers. In an interview with Daurio Beverley, Brand states, "What some white reviewers lack is a sense of what literature that is made by Black people and other people of colour is about. If you read my work, you have to read Toni Morrison, you have to read Derek Walcott, Rosa Guy, Jean Rhys, Paule Marshall, Michael Anthony, Eddie Brathwaite, and African writers and poets ... Bessie Head. I don't consider myself on any margin, on the margin of Canadian literature I'm sitting right in the middle of Black literature, because that's who I read, that's who I respond to" (*Books in Canada*, October 1990, 14 qtd. in Morrell 170).

Nourbese Philip feels that culture should not become a bone of contention for racial discrimination. Generally the fangs of racism are raised in the fields of education, employment, housing and police relations. But the 1990 confrontation between the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) and the African Canadian Community over the display, *Into the Heart of Africa* is an attempt by Canada at confusing culture with race. According to her it was for the first time that culture as a site of contestation attracted widespread attention. It happened because "The dismissal by white Canadians, led by the media of the complaints by African Canadians once again underscored the resistance of Canadian society to any acknowledgement of racism" (*Frontiers* 12).

Brand gives valid reasons for the protest by Africans against the exhibition named *Into the Heart of Africa* at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in 1990.

She argues that it is the colonists' view of the plunder of Africa. Europeans are shown as "Superior" and Africans "primitive"; missionaries and marauders bring "civilization" "into the heart of Africa". African-Canadians demonstrated against the exhibition every Saturday. But the Canadian police arrested the African Canadians who demonstrated against the exhibition calling it "Racist Ontario Museum" (ROM). "Ten men and women have been beaten, strip- searched, and arrested by the Toronto police and bonded not to come within one thousand feet of the museum" (*Bread Out Of Stone* 22).

Racism is also the reigning force in work place in Canada. The Blacks are employed to do risky jobs and the work nobody wants to do. Brand makes this clear in her *No Language Is Neutral*:

the work nobody else wants to do.. it's good  
work I'm not complaining! but they make it taste bad,  
bitter like peas You can't smile here, is a sin, you  
can't play music, it too loud. (31)

Tania Das Gupta in her book *Racism and Paid Work*, reports studies by Porter, Pineo and Mackie according to which "Peoples of colour, including Native peoples, Asia and Black Canadians, were in subordinate positions in the occupational hierarchy" (5). There is a "Dual market" in the field of employment in Canada. There are "primary" and "secondary" labour markets in Canada, the former employs white and male workers and the latter more women and Black and minority workers (6).



The Abella Commission Report confirmed that Blacks, Natives, South-East Asians, and central and South American peoples earned the lowest income.

In the Canadian context, people who have been subjected to racism are the Native Peoples, and Canadians of African, Caribbean, Asian, South American, Arab, Jewish and Moslem backgrounds. The social economic and political context within which discrimination or racism is experienced also has a fundamental effect on the nature and scope of oppression.

(Das Gupta 10)

The U. N. Conference on race held in Durban between 31 August and 7 September 2001 was attended by delegates from 160 countries. The main issue dividing North and South was the demand for reparation for slavery, made by Africans and the Black Diaspora, especially the descendants of American slaves. According to the U. N. General Secretary, Kofi Annan, mutual accusations are not part of the conference; the main objective must be to improve the lot of the victims. On the second day of Conference itself African leaders demanded from the Western countries an apology for the destruction caused by colonialism and slavery. African leaders were of the view that an apology would recognize the wrong that was committed against Africans and constitute a promise that such an atrocity would never happen again. The Conference has been marred by controversy over how to deal with the legacy of slavery and colonialism. Fidel Castro, the Cuban leader, in his address said, "After the purely formal slavery emancipation, African Americans were subjected during 100 more years to the harshest racial discrimination, and many of its features still persist. Cuba speaks of

reparations, and supports this idea as an unavoidable moral duty to the victims of racism". South African Public Service and Administration minister Geraldine Fraser-Molekei reinforced the African sentiment by saying "Africa is of the view that an apology is important to us as a region. The African demand for reparation for slavery insisted on sealing an agreement on fighting racism "wherever it can be found". A day after the conference was due to close, the Durban Declaration hammered out a text laying down measures to combat racism and xenophobia. On slavery, the text "acknowledges and profoundly regrets the massive human sufferings and the tragic plight of millions of men, women and children" and branded the trade a crime against humanity. The U. N. high commissioner for human rights Mary Robinson, who was secretary-general of the conference, termed the declaration as an achievement. U. N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan welcomed the accord, but regretted the event was overshadowed by disagreements (Source: The Times of India, Ahmedabad, 3, 7, 10 September 2001). It is not easy for Africans to forget the past, though the nations that flourished on slavery attempt "the erasure of the genocide against Africans and refuse to acknowledge the crime against humanity"(Showing Grit 80). Philip further states that there is "the collective social amnesia around the holocaust that reaped bloody harvest of Africans from Africa, sowed the Atlantic with her dead and peopled the New World" (Showing Grit 80). Through the medium of their prose and poetry Harris, Philip and Brand remind the world of the past and present plight of their race in Canada and elsewhere in the west.

The descendents<sup>a</sup> of those who suffered under the inhuman slave masters only know how humiliating it was to be slaves. Though slavery was abolished in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the descendents of former slaves and the members of the community that suffered find it difficult to accept what happened a century ago. The narrative of Mary Prince, the first slave to narrate her story after escaping from her slave masters would move any hard hearts. She describes the cruelty of the slave master and particularly the shame to which slave woman<sup>e</sup> were subjected. I take the following account from the "Introduction" to *Caribbean Women Writers* edited by Selwyn R. Cudjoe, "One of the most slave accounts to appear in the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* was "The History of Mary Prince, A west Indian Slave, Related by herself (1831)". Mary Prince was an eyewitness to the brutal reality of slavery. She accompanied her owners to Britain in 1828, but left them because of their cruel treatment to her.

How can slaves be happy when they have the halter round their neck, and the whip upon their back? and are disgraced and thought no more of than beasts? – and are separated from their mothers, and husbands, and children, and sister, just as cattle are sold and separated? Is it happiness for a driver in the field to take down his wife or sister or child, and strip them, and whip them in such a disgraceful manner? – women that have had children exposed in the open field to shame! There is no modesty or decency shown by the owner to his slaves; men, women, and children are exposed alike. . . . They tie up slaves like hogs – moor (tie) them up like cattle, and they lick them, so as hogs, or horses never were flogged; . .

mothers could only weep and mourn over their children, they could not save them from cruel masters - from the whip, the rope, and the cow skin.

(Cudjoe 11-12)

Mary Prince is terribly pained at what slave owners make others believe that slaves never wanted to be free. It is significant to note here that Mary Prince was the first English speaking Caribbean woman to publish her narrative much before slavery was abolished in the British colonies. Such atrocities against humanity crop up even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century although there are organizations to safeguard human rights and human dignity. The root cause of all these is due only to the neglect of the fact that every human being is equal. Amy Gutmann in the 'Introduction' to Taylor's *Multiculturalism* writes that there is one universalistic principle accepted by people who believe in human equality "Treat all people as free and equal beings" (10).

Steven C. Rockefeller in the comments on Taylor's *Multiculturalism* reiterates Gutmann's views:

All human beings as the bearers of a universal human nature – as persons – are of equal value from the democratic perspective, and all people as persons deserve equal respect and equal opportunity for self-realization. In other words, from the liberal democratic point of view a person has a right to claim equal recognition first and foremost on the basis of his or her universal human identity and potential, not primarily on the basis of an ethnic identity. Our universal identity as human beings is our primary

identity and is more fundamental than any particular identity, whether it be a matter of citizenship, gender, race, or ethnic origin. (88)

Appiah in his commentary on Taylor's *Multiculturalism* titled 'Identity, Authenticity, Survival' writes

And if one is to be Black in a society that is racist then one has to deal constantly with assaults on one's dignity. In this context, insisting on the right to live a dignified life will not be enough. It will not even be enough to require being treated with equal dignity despite being Black, for that will require a concession that being Black counts naturally or to some degree against one's dignity. And so one will end up asking to be respected as a *Black*. (161)

Appiah further wants politics of recognition to acknowledge politically "one's skin colour, one's sexual body in ways that make it hard for those who want to treat their skin and their sexual body as personal dimensions of the self. And personal means not secret, but not too tightly scripted (163). In his commentary "Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State" on Charles Taylor's *Multiculturalism*, Jürgen Habermas, the German Political Philosopher argues for politics that recognizes diverse cultural identities. When one recognizes the cultural identities of others, s/he also accepts the concept of equal rights. But the very 'concept of equal rights' evaporates in thin air the moment the minoritized culture is asked to 'tolerate' the majority or 'national' culture that assigns it the marginal status of a minority (Bennet 6). Addressing minority identity as a

collective performance of historical reconstruction, Bhabha figures this 'relocation' as temporal rather than territorial. The minoritized indigenous or migrant culture is defined by post-imperial, western national culture as 'behind' or belated in time, still to catch up and conform itself with the modernity national culture. According to Bhabha the minority demand is not for equality, but for recognition of difference, a demand that opens up a difference within 'national' culture itself (cited in Bennett 9). When the fang of racism loses its venom, minority cultures would feel secure and recognized.

The focus of the next chapter is on the problems faced by the racially segregated people, when they are deterritorialized from their own native land and reterritorialized in a new territory colonized by their own erstwhile colonizers. The agony and pain of deterritorialization coupled with the unfriendly and often inhuman treatment in the reterritorialized land has made African Caribbean women writers in Canada to produce a kind of literature that has made a lot of difference in the world.

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