RACIAL CONTESTATIONS IN THE *BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT*: THE MEMOIR APPROACH

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A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Arts in Literature of Chuka University

CHUKA UNIVERSITY
OCTOBER 2024

DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for an award of a diploma or degree in any institution.

Signature ..... Date 17/10/24

James Gitonga
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Recommendation

This Thesis has been examined, passed and submitted with our approval as the University Supervisors.

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DEDICATION

To My Mother Lorraine, your prayers have been my Pivot.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to God for the grace, health, and provision that have sustained me through the challenging journey of my studies.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my supervisors, Dr.Mate Mukasa and Dr.Jackson Gikunda Njogu for their invaluable guidance in bringing this work to completion. Their roles as honest critics, and dedicated scholars have imparted in me a sense of patience, resilience, and tolerance. May God bless you.

I wish to acknowledge the priceless support of my classmates. Thank you, Nelly Gatuti, Muriungi Kanaa, Lawrence, Valerie, Rose, and Brendah. I extend my gratitude to St. Massimo Secondary School community for their love and support. I am particularly indebted to the Principal Mr. Peter Lithumai,who never hesitated to grant me permission for the numerous consultations.

To Chuka University, you are a wellspring of insight, and a beacon of growth. The opportunity to pursue my Master's degree has opened up limitless scholarly horizons.

ABSTRACT

Extensive research has been conducted on racism in African American literature. Much of this literary scholarship has predominantly utilized a fictional approach, thereby marginalizing actual human experiences. This study attempted to fill the gap by examining racial contestations during the Black Lives Matter Movement through memoirs, specifically *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F. Saad and *When They Call You a Terrorist; A Black Lives Matter Memoir* by Patrisse Khan-Cullors and Asha Bandele. The study was guided by two objectives: To examine the memoiric techniques employed in the selected works and to investigate racial reception by the people of colour in the chosen memoirs. The investigation revealed how binaries range from general contrasts like light/dark and white/black to more complex and culturally significant elements such as man/woman, colonizer/colonized, and self/other. A postcolonial theoretical framework, particularly Edward Said's concept of Orientalism was adopted to examine racial contestations in the selected memoirs. This theoretical strand provided an interpretive framework to interrogate how white supremacists exercise dominance and hegemony over others. The literature review underscored the importance of this study, demonstrating that racial studies have historically subjected people of colour to stereotypes, necessitating the memoir as a tool to counter inherent hegemony. Being qualitative in nature, the study, relied heavily on close reading and analysis of the texts, supported by secondary sources such as journals, dissertations, internet sources, and other relevant materials. The study is organized into six chapters. The first chapter provides the background, outlining the problem, objectives, and research questions. Chapter two covers the literature review, critical reception of the memoirs under scrutiny and theoretical framework, while chapter three discusses methodology and ethical considerations. Chapter four examines the memoiric techniques, detailing the uniqueness of presentation in the memoir genre through truth telling, emotional Journey of the narrator and the first-person narrative voice. Chapter five explores the racial reception by the people of colour,arguing that the cradle of power lies with the hegemon due to white Supremacy and racial stereotyping. Chapter six presents the findings, showing that memoirs, through their unique techniques, diverge from fictional genres in recounting the experiences of people of colour. Furthermore, it demonstrated that the marginalization of the other persists due to white supremacy, which fosters white privilege. As such, future research should investigate how white-authored memoirs portray racial conflicts and explore whether Black Supremacy concept exists. This study is significant as it presents the memoir as an indispensable tool to present actual human experiences.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The history of African American literature is deeply intertwined with racial themes. To understand the unique division of American society into black and white, it is crucial to explore its origins, since social definitions often persist long after their initial motivations have faded.

Bobby Hutton's murder in April 1968 and the last two police killings in July 2016 are separated by almost fifty years. Hutton’s death, which occurred only a few days after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., catapulted the Panther Movement to the forefront of the black community as well as the broader anti-war and new left movements. Furthermore, a thorough reading of W.E.B. Dubois's Black Writings exposes his claims that the colour line will be one of the main issues of the twentieth century. According to him, race is a category of social, economic, or political analysis that cannot be reduced to any other category—not even class—because the issue of race always intersects with and impedes the resolution of other issues. As such, in a world where colours such as black, white, yellow, red, and brown hold significant importance, these hues unfortunately define race and identity. For centuries, they have been the foundation of hatred, violence, persecution, prejudice, supremacy, and subjugation.Additionally,a historical examination of literary texts reveals that the politics of colour is nearly as old as civilization itself, with strained race relations evident as those considered superior, typically white individuals, often viewed black people as savages or slaves. (Winthrop, 1968; Hunwick, 2000; Du Bois, 1903;).

African American literature has consistently sought to revolutionize racial perspectives in America. Its roots can be traced back to the slave narratives of Phillis Wheatley and Frederick Douglass, and the socially and politically charged writings of Booker T. Washington.However,this flourishing of literariness took a more aesthetic turn with the advent of Zora Neale Hurston, who focused on the black woman's quest for identity (Wheatley, 1773; Douglass, 1845; Washington, 1900; Hurston, 1937).

From the beginning of American history, laws, social systems, customs, and institutions it has been evident that America was intended to be a white man's country. This notion was reinforced with the arrival of the first slaves in Jamestown in 1619, signifying that neither they nor their descendants were meant to become American citizens. Slave narratives during the antebellum period depicted suffering and subjugation, as ex-slaves published narratives were widely disseminated for abolitionist activism. These works illustrated the terrorizing nature of slavery and its profound impact on the black psyche (Miletsky, 2008; Ronald, 2009).

Despite enduring suffering and oppression, African Americans in the South sought redemption Throughout the Civil War and Reconstruction eras. Wells (2000) asserts that "the time for coloured men and women to organize for self-improvement has arrived" (p. 240). Despite these observations by Wells, during the closing years of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century, the challenge arose of reconciling the genteel style and sentimental tone prevalent in popular American literature, marking the beginning of written African American folklore with Harris Chadler recording oral stories for the first time.

The Harlem Renaissance brought a flourishing of African American art, music, and literature, inspired by Marcus Garvey, Alain Locke, and W.E.B. Du Bois,a movement that fostered pride in black culture and inspired African Americans to embrace and celebrate their heritage. However, the popularity of the Harlem Renaissance declined in the 1930s as writers shifted their focus to social criticism during the Great Depression, leading to urban realism, a period for reconstructing the mythology driving Jim Crow culture, with Negro writers challenging and politicizing the depoliticized caste system inherent in Jim Crow. (Wright, 1937).

Throughout the Civil Rights Movement, writers drew both imaginative and social inspiration from the freedom struggles of the late 1950s and 1960s. The Black Arts Movement, intertwined with the Civil Rights Movement, shaped racial contestations, highlighting the reality of racial discrimination and segregation, with this period's literature featuring powerful imagery and a desire to unite fragmented identities, symbolizing the history of race and oppression (Bhakti, 2021; Schill & Wachter, 2001; Latifa et al., 2016).

The 1970s saw a renaissance in African American literature, particularly with black women writers. for example, Toni Morrison addresses the dilemmas faced by African American women due to racial and sexist oppression, challenging western beauty standards and emphasizing the social construction of beauty, while the late 20th century saw the rise of African American drama, with August Wilson's work reflecting oral and written traditions and the value of the past in establishing African American identity (Morrison, 1970; Eknath, 2016, Sahaya et al., 2024).

This study argues that while fictional writers have highlighted black experiences in white America, they often create fictional characters that overlook real human experiences. The memoir genre in the Black Lives Matter Movement fills this gap, providing a forum for individual stories that reflect a larger collective history. The genre has gained prominence because it offers a platform for marginalized voices to tell their stories, making it a suitable medium for reflecting on identity deconstruction and conveying alternative race relations and cultural negotiations (Sefffer, 2015).

There is a notable parallel between Toni Morrison's essay *Black Matters* and the Black Lives Matter Movement, both of which question why race remains significant in American society. Morrison's literary focus and contemporary activists' response to extrajudicial killings of black individuals underscore the on-going importance of understanding the dynamics of American racial conceptions and anti-black racism. While Morrison argues that understanding blackness is essential to comprehend whiteness, today's activists assert that Black Lives Matter because black individuals deserve the same basic human rights and dignity as white individuals.

The Black Lives Matter global network comprises communities working together to end police brutality, advocate for policy changes, amplify black stories, encourage the people of colour to run for political offices, and support black people. The movement, initiated by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Khan-Cullors, and Opal Tometi, originated as an online campaign under the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter.It was launched in reaction to the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the killing of Trayvon Martin. The protests following the acquittal laid the foundation for the modern Black Lives Matter Movement, which gained further exposure after Michael Brown's shooting in 2014 (Calamur, 2014; Simon, 2017; Freelon et al., 2016). In conclusion, although African

Americans are no longer enslaved or segregated, it can be asserted that racial contestations persist during the Black Lives Matter period.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The American literary oeuvre is rich with themes of race. Much of this body of literature presents racial perspectives through fiction. However, there has been limited scholarly focus on the racial discourse during the Black Lives Matter Movement within the memoir genre. This research aims to address this void by exploring racial conflicts depicted in *Me and White Supremacy* authored by Layla F. Saad, and *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter* Memoir by Patrisse Khan-Cullors and Asha Bandele. The study will provide new insights in the Memoir approach on race relations.

1.3 Research Objectives

i. To examine the memoiric techniques in *Me and White Supremacy* and *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir*.
ii. To investigate racial reception by the people of colour in *Me* and *White Supremacy* and *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir*.

1.4 Research Questions

i. What are the memoiric techniques in *Me and White Supremacy* and *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir?*
ii. What is the racial reception by the people of colour in *Me and White Supremacy* and *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir?*

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine racial contestations during the Black Lives Matter Movement, with a focus on the portrayals found in *Me and White Supremacy* and *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir*.

1.6 Justification of the Study

This research contributes new knowledge to racial studies by exploring racial contestations in the memoir genre. It presents memoirs as a vital tool for examining racial issues during the Black Lives Matter Movement.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This research explored the theme of racial conflicts as presented in *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F. Saad and *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter* Memoir by Patrisse Khan-Cullors and Asha Bandele. Although the authors have extensively written on race, white supremacy, and anti-blackness, this study narrows down to these two texts as they provide critical insights into racial contestations during the Black Lives Matter Movement. Additionally, these texts align well with the study's objectives.

1.8 Assumptions of the Study

The study assumes that the racial contestations depicted in the selected memoirs are biased towards subjugating people of colour and benefiting white individuals. It also assumes that the memoir approach, being based on actual human experiences, presents its subject matter in a concrete and truthful manner.

1.9 Operationalization of Terms

The following terms are employed with meanings that vary from their usual interpretations. In this study, they are understood as follows

African American	**:**	Refers to an individual whose ancestry traces back to the racial groups of Africa. In this Study, it implies a category of those considered as people of colour in America.
Black Lives Matter Movement	**:**	Emerging from the socio-political movement established in America in 2013 by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Khan-Cullors, and Opal Tometi, the initiative was as a result of the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the 2012 shooting of Trayvon Martin. In this study, it refers to the marginalized voices within the memoir genre.
Identity	**:**	As used by Erikson (1968), it denotes the distinct characteristics that differentiates an individual or a collective from others of the same kind. This definition is applied in this study.
Manifestation	**:**	The process of becoming visible or evident. In this study, it specifically means the depiction of racism.
Orientalism	**:**	Refers to Edward Said's theoretical strand, which constructs the Orient as inferior and the Occident as superior. In this study, it highlights the ambivalence in the contestations between white people and people of colour.
Other(s)	**:**	Used to describe the race deemed inferior from the perspective of the dominant group. In this study it refers specifically to people of colour.
People of Colour	**:**	Denotes individuals outside of the white racial category. For this study, it includes African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Pacific Islander Americans, Multiracial Americans, and Latino Americans.
Racial Contestation(s)	**:**	In this study, it refers to intellectual, social, economic, and political ideological disagreements arising from racial differences.

Self	**:**	Refers to the purportedly superior race. In this study, it denotes the hegemonic white race, serving as the ambivalent of other.
White Supremacy	**:**	Refers to the belief and manifestation by white individuals that they are superior or more powerful than people of colour.
Whiteness	**:**	The quality or state of being white. In this study, it is viewed from a racial paradigm.
Perception	**:**	The process through which people reflect on and consider specific phenomena. In this study, it implies how people of colour, interpret, and understand racism.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Studies on the Place of the People of Colour

African Americans have endured numerous events that shape their worldview due to a prolonged history of stereotypes associated with submissiveness, backwardness, lewdness, treachery, and dishonesty. Extensive scholarship notes a persistent duality within the African American experience. As stated on page 108, Kimberly (2019) notes that African Americans have been mistakenly encouraged to undervalue racial distinctions, to think that "from one blood, God created all nations," and to talk of "human brotherhood" as if it has already been achieve. This paradox of race in America is evident in the nation's history, which is stained with racial prejudice ingrained in the culture and society. This prejudice demonstrates that racial discrimination and prejudice are grim realities of American society, internalized as an abhorrent mindset and present in the literature of every era. As a result, the binary paradigm of race between black and white has garnered growing attention and analysis from scholars (Ramadani, 2021).

The marginality between the people of colour and whites has continued to widen. Smriti (2016) notes that Davis, as an autobiographer, illustrates how racial violence ironically equips black children with resistance tools. For Davis, this resistance is active and aggressive. Affiliations with other black children help overcome passive victimhood and present a resilient front against white racist hatred, showing how black affinity results from white hostility, a viewpoint indicating that the African American literary canon constructs self vs. the other, hence supporting the relevance of this study. The study delves into how the dominance of white individuals in America is justified by the belief that the perceived superiority or inferiority of various groups' abilities, values, and cultures is associated with physical traits such as skin colour, a view supported by Feagin & Melvin (1994). Nevertheless, Sue (2003) cautions that labelling black individuals as different and inferior based on their colour fosters systemic subordination by a predominantly white society, thereby perpetuating racial conflicts—a central theme of this research.Further,Sue contends that the marginalization of people of colour in America is not only an individual issue but is also embedded in the practices and operations of American institutions, businesses, and societal structures (p. 31).

The impact of race on American society is profound and cannot be overlooked. Hana (2011) analyses literary works that depict the dehumanizing and terrorizing effects of racism. She suggests that Lorraine Hansberry, a black woman and artist born in 1930, was deeply aware of the pervasive impact of racism, in her play *A Raisin in the Sun*, while addressing racial prejudice, reflecting the urban segregation her family faced and the capitalist system in Chicago, symbolizing black oppression and resistance (Gordon, 2008, p. 126). Hansberry highlights the daily racial attacks her family endured in their new white neighbourhood, where they were subjected to bricks and bottles thrown through their windows (Gordon, 2008, p. 124). Despite these scholarly insights into the racial discourse, this research emphasizes the evolution of this debate during the Black Lives Matter era, particularly as presented within the memoir genre.

In a similar vein, Guadalupe & George (2009) explore how the sense of white supremacy influences the depiction of racism within communities of colour. They argue that the term 'white supremacy' is both provocative and harsh, evoking images of historical atrocities such as genocide, slavery, and segregation, as well as contemporary instances of narrow-minded, racist, and extremist hate groups (Guadalupe & George, 2009, p. 68). These academics also point out that a lot of critical race theorists modify this language by talking about ideas like institutionalized racism and white privilege, differentiating between covert and overt racism, and talking about discriminatory actions and biased attitudes (p. 68).

This study finds plausible the argument that whiteness uses stereotypical comments on people of colour to belittle them. Gowher & Sanjay (2022) note that African Americans have perpetually suffered from misrecognition due to their race, while Franklin & Moss (1988) affirm that even after the Civil War when slavery was abolished, people of colour were regarded as inferior citizens and have been treated unfairly by white people throughout history (p. 5). However, this study aims to examine the portrayal of the perceived inferiority of people of colour within the memoir genre.

Several studies within African American literature have investigated racial stereotypes as manifestations of racism. The stereotypical presentation of African Americans permeates American literary writings, an assertion agreed upon by

Palencia (1994). Palencia explores the challenges African Americans face in ´´grappling with imposed stereotypes, which create a dual struggle for Black American writers: breaking away from norms imposed by white society while simultaneously crafting their own identities´´ (Palencia, 1994, p. 1). Given such a contentious racial environment, it becomes apparent that racial stereotyping has aggressively facilitated the perpetuation of racial subjugation, a dynamic that this study intends to examine. Palencia further contends that African American identity has been shaped by a society whose literature reflects its white racist ideologies (p. 1).Contrary to this opinion, in his reinterpretation of Herman Melville's short story *Benito Cereno*, Johnson (1990) demonstrates that black individuals possess spiritual complexity, challenging the simplistic notion that their impulse to revolt is a primitive instinct, while criticising the myth of the black character as being morally and intellectually inferior´´ (p. 23).

In deconstructing and challenging these myths, Johnson reveals that black characters are intricate, with a wide range of emotions, beneath which lies inherent goodness and intelligence, both of which have been suppressed through slavery. While Johnson's perspective offers a critique of such stereotypes, this study focuses on examining the various forms of racial suppression faced by people of colour during the Black Lives Matter Movement. Intertwined with the fulcral idea of stereotypes, is White Supremacy. Ansley (1989) describes the feeling of superiority by one dominant racial group in the following way:

> By white supremacy I do not mean to allude only to the self-conscious racism of white supremacy hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily re-enacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings (Ansley as cited in Gilborn, 2006, p 32).

This system of white supremacy preserves the notion of whiteness as superior, reinforcing the idea that white people deserve greater access to resources and authority than others, a reality that manifests in acts of police brutality and systemic injustice against black people (Martinot & Sexton, 2003). The continual struggle between white dominance and the subordination of non-whites, which plays out daily

within African American society, often results in violence and injustice towards people of colour,a dynamic that closely aligns with the focus of this study, which explores the position of the other within this context.

Discrimination and diversity still exist in the face of institutional racism, which is defined as institutions, political perspectives, practices, laws, and behaviors that disfavour a certain racial group. Racial arguments often profess to uphold these ideals. Furthermore, movements for racial justice and decolonization created critical vocabulary regarding the interplay between race and power. Social actors from various political backgrounds used this rhetoric as a counter-revolutionary tactic against ongoing liberation efforts, suggesting that racism is a complex issue. Racism is not limited to the extreme right-wing and racist organizations and persons that it is often associated with, such as the Ku Klux Klan, National Action, the British National Party, and their adherents (Gillborn, 2006).

This racial extremism has been critically illuminated by the literary writer Maya Angelou. Saikat (2015) avers that ´while Angelou is acutely aware of the painful history of her community, which is a history of elite or white America where African Americans exist marginally, they seldom see themselves as themselves but through the eyes of whites, thus feeling the pull of two conflicting cultures: African and American´ (Saikat, 2015, p. 49). Contending with the idea of beauty, Angelou (1995) shatters the axiom that a white-skinned woman is beautiful, celebrating her Black beauty and claiming that her beauty as a phenomenal woman does not depend on white perspectives (p. 52).

In addition to the scholarly explications above, it is arguable that racism has been mutating in America, creating new self and other binaries through relational ambivalence. White supremacy is the driving force behind the advantages linked to 'white privilege,' which refers to a unidirectional flow of power where benefits are disproportionately allocated to white people, often at the expense of people of colour. Leonardo (2004) supports this claim by stating that White domination is not solely a result of job discrimination, Jim Crow laws, or slavery; rather, it is continually re-established and reconstructed by White (p. 143). These assertions are critical to this study as they interrogate how this unsettled white domination has shaped the racial

debate in memoirs produced during the Black Lives Matter Movement. Unlike fictional character presentations, this study examines the depiction of real-life narratives on encounters with racial hegemony.

In support of this claim, Timothy (1990) examines the ambivalence that arises from interactions between black and white people in a country where white people predominate. He contends that both critics and novelists of Afro-American literature must grapple with the issue of how to represent the black self on the white page and how to get past the western literary tradition's inherent ethnocentrism (p. 747). This study explores the outcomes of interactions between whites and people of colour through the lenses of hegemon and other. Houston (2016) expands on this phenomenon in the critical phrase “black hole,” referring to a place on the edge of experience where all people of colour in America are born and return to after a brief holiday of bourgeois bliss in the white world. Houston asserts that this aspect is recurrent in almost every novel written by African Americans (p. 7). He further posits that most novels recount the plight of their character’s descent from middle-class status to the misery of the black hole (p. 8).

However, in pursuing racial debates, it is paramount to foreground the theory that serves as a foundation for this study, since a critical assessment of the worldview of racism suggests that although the status quo of people of colour has improved in America, even the prominent and influential ones are continually haunted by their awareness of the evanescent nature of the status they have achieved and of the fact that they remain outsiders. Consequently, this study interrogates how the marginal position of people of colour persists in real-life encounters in the selected memoirs.

Literary writers in African American literature have passionately depicted the black "other" as subjugated and marginalized. the portrayal of people of colour by white society as marginalized and othered has consistently challenged African American writers, historians, and intellectuals. These individuals have worked diligently to assert the presence of people of colour, bringing to light their overlooked, excluded, or oppressed history, culture, and social environment while recounting their varied experiences (Mohamed & Khaleed, 2022).

Engaging in this discourse, Arethra (2009) notes that Morrison's early works, such as *The Tar Baby* (1981),), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Sula* (1973), and *Bluest Eye* (1970, delve into the damaging effects of white hegemonic ideology and on the cultural and communal identity of black people (Arethra, 2009, p. 14). These novels emphasize the importance of cultural memory concerning racism, whereas this study aimed to explore racial consciousness during the Black Lives Matter Movement.

Moreover, a close reading of black literature reveals that writers have sought to dismantle the negative portrayal of the "other" in America. Amiri (1965), advocates unapologetic blackness and is committed to identity, confronting and combating racial injustices. Amiri strengthens the case for black pride by dismissing the ideals of the Western literary tradition while advocating for a theatre that resonates with, represents, and addresses black audiences. He confronts the stereotypical portrayals forced upon black people, asserting that the main objective of his theatre is to "target" anything that can be targeted, as it represents the voice of the oppressed (Home, p. 211). This research explores these racial injustices as they are portrayed in memoirs from the Black Lives Matter Movement.

The legend of *The Flying Dutchman* symbolizes the perpetual binary struggles between the self and the "other," a theme central to this study. The tale of *The Flying Dutchman*, a ship transporting enslaved people between West Africa and America during the 17th century, portrays it as cursed to sail forever without finding a safe port, serving as retribution for the crew's transgressions (as referenced in Cardullo; Nelson, pp. 53-54). Within this study's framework, the ongoing racial conflict between people of colour and white populations is akin to this endless voyage—forever unresolved unless substantial efforts are made to mend this troubled relationship. Mahshid & Farshid (2014) contend that:

> Fanon believed that racism would eventually cause an inferiority complex in black-skinned subjects who found themselves unable to effect any alteration in the discriminatory status quo:in other words the white dominators would gradually compel blacks to internalize the negative stereotypes of their skin color which portrayed blackness as the symbol of vice and depravity (p.65).

According to McLeod (2014), Fanon's identity is associated with negative ideas by those in positions of authority because he (Fanon) is forced to view himself as an object rather than a human subject, a freak at the mercy of a group that perceives him as less than fully human and inferior, subject to their definitions and representation (p. 23). This notion is similar to the way Ellison (1952) begins his novel The *Invisible Man* by introducing his unnamed narrator with "I am an Invisible Man " (p. 3). Although, this study agrees with Ellison's fictional assertions, suggesting that the African American has been ´invisible´ through the white gaze, the current research examines the invisibility in the memoir genre. While the title The *Invisible Man* serves as an extended metaphor throughout the literary work, representing the Black male experience of being deprived of their native culture and labelled as "other," this study aligns with scholarly works that illuminate how the people of colour are represented by the terrorizing binaries of self vs. other, black vs. white during the Black Lives Matter Movement. According to Lieber (1972), this invisibility must profoundly represent the difficult psychological predicaments faced by males who lack a strong sense of their group identification and whose sense of self is often rejected by the majority culture (p. 86).

The fusion of two disparate cultures can result in a novel hybrid state, as described by Bhabha (1994), who refers to this phenomenon as the "emergence of hybridity" (pp. 79, 147).Likewise, Barry (2002) highlights the potential for "cultural polyvalency," which allows individuals to simultaneously belong to multiple cultural or social groups (p. 201),a notion that helps elucidate the racial dichotomy depicted by Ellison, where invisibility and hypervisibility reflect how the "other" is simultaneously overlooked as an individual yet overwhelmingly stereotyped (Homeland, p. 36). This study examines the reasons behind and mechanisms of such stereotyping. Discussions on race, diversity, and multiculturalism are incomplete without addressing the systemic nature of racism and white privilege (p. 266), an investigation which aligns with this perspective by exploring racism as an entrenched and dominant system (Fishkin,1993; Cross,2008).

Racial marginalization often occurs in subtle ways. For example, the high incidences of violence against African Americans, whether from police or gangs in cities like Chicago, mirrors the racial violence depicted by Harper (1960). Such instances reflect

persistent racial biases, suggesting that these biases are deeply intertwined rather than separate as "old" and "new" forms of racism. Some scholars view these aspects of racism as different levels rather than discrete categories (Scheurich & Young, 1997). Similarly, critical race theorists (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Enciso, 2007; Ladson & Tate, 1995; Scheurich & Young, 1997) have integrated these concepts with ideas like whiteness, historical privilege, and systemic racism.

Cross delineates the difference between these forms, noting that what is termed "old racism" often corresponds to individual-level or overt racism (Scheurich & Young, 1997). Delgado (1995) considers historical moments like the civil rights movement, Jim Crow laws, and enslavement, when racist acts—emotional or physical—were overt and stemmed from white supremacist ideologies (Cross, p. 267). This form of racism is evident in classic literature, including works like *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, where racial prejudice and discrimination are overt and manifest.

Fishkin (1993) explores the influence of African American culture and linguistic patterns on the development of Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, both as a novel and as a character. She elaborates on how the African American perspective enriches our comprehension of Twain's views on race and slavery, and also addresses Toni Morrison's insights into racial matters and the use of the racial slur "Nigger." Fishkin concludes that the character of Huckleberry Finn serves as a symbolic link between white and black communities in America. While these works underscore the challenges faced by African Americans, they do not provide an in-depth analysis of these issues. This study offers a more comprehensive examination of these challenges as experienced by the people of colour in the memoir genre.

Ibrahim (2016) examines the depiction of black slaves in fiction and asserts that Mark Twain ultimately acknowledges the significance of black experiences as a fundamental aspect of American life. This reality is reflected across various facets of what is known as the post-racial era in the U.S. For instance, in a report on the US election in 2024, PBS News quotes Trump as saying, "I didn't know she (Harris) was black until a number of years ago when she happened to turn black and now, she wants to be known as black," in reference to Vance's and Trump's attempts to weaponize Kamala Harris' multiracial identity. On Trump´s assertions, the Pbs news

elaborates that ´the early 20th century introduced the ´one drop rule´ to America, which codified racism into law in some Us states. It asserts that any person with even one black, regarding multiracial Americans with white ancestry ´impure´ and viewed them as contaminated.

The ongoing fatalities of African Americans at the hands of law enforcement have renewed public discussions about the unfair and inequitable treatment of racial minorities in a nation that was established on the principle of equal opportunity. As noted by Forman Jr. (2017), the contemporary discussions regarding racial issues within the American criminal justice system are extensive, fervent, and frequently motivated (Forman Jr., 2017, p. 14). While acknowledging this detailed viewpoint, the current research further examines the specific racial contestations during the Black Lives Matter Movement. Forman Jr. asks, "How is it that the number of black elected officials has increased dramatically since the civil rights movement era, alongside an almost equal increase in black incarceration?" (p. 15).

Paradoxically, Forman Jr. ends his critique by holding African Americans accountable for their circumstances. He claims that many black police officers and administrators, along with members of the African American political elite, firmly supported the policing strategies that led to the forced incarceration of communities of colour (p. 15). This study disagrees with this assertion, as it seems to place the blame on African Americans, thereby perpetuating a one-sided debate. The murders of Trayvon Martin in 2012, Willie Ray Banks in 2011, Eric Garner and Michael Brown in 2014, and Breonna Taylor and George Floyd in 2020 highlight the deep-seated racism present in the structures of white institutions (Lopez, 2010; Peterson, 2015). As demonstrated, racial contestations in African American literature remain a pertinent issue today. The position of people of colour remains marred by ambivalence and uncertainty.

2.2 Black Lives Matter Movement; Racial Prejudice

The recent increase in murder cases, incarceration rates, and the stereotyping of people of colour in America has reignited discussions on racial issues during the Black Lives Matter period. Alexander (2020) notes:

> Rather than rely on race, we use our criminal justice system to label people of colour ´criminals´ and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind. Today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against African-Americans. Once you are labelled a felon, the old forms of discrimination-employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of educational opportunity, denial of the right to vote...are suddenly legal. As a criminal you have scarcely more rights and arguably less respect, than a black man living in Alabama, at the height of Jim Crow. We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it... (p.2).

Alexander's argument illustrates that America's power structure enables, and in some ways benefits, the white in reaching the highest levels of educational, political, economic, and military success with little to no understanding or experience of the challenges faced by people of colour. This lack of knowledge, according to this study, contributes to racial heterogeneity—a concept defined by Lowe (1996) as "the existence of differences and differential relationships within a bounded category" (p. 67).

Since violence against an individual or his property is motivated solely or primarily by his membership in a social category, it is considered social in nature (Williams, 2021). People of colour in America have historically been portrayed as inherently dangerous and criminally inclined (p.62). Anti-black stereotypes have expanded, with white individuals during the Black Lives Matter Movement applying stereotypes of danger and criminality historically associated with black people to non-black individuals who publicly support black advancement, such as through protest participation (Anderson, 2016). The studies by Williams and Anderson are crucial, as they provide a foundation for this research on racial stereotypes. For instance, Octavia (1979) and Coloson (1999) depicts a world filled with the descendants of the African diaspora as envisioned realms occupied by foreign entities whose existence obstructs the advancement of the community.

These stereotypes are oversimplifications of social groups that persist despite lacking proof. Moreover, these rigid impressions of a group's shared attributes are widely accepted by society and often assist individuals in understanding social settings, situations, and interactions (Larnell et al., 2014, p. 49). Larnell further suggests that "stereotypes are linked to biases, prejudice, and systemic discrimination towards

African Americans, which may trigger adverse reactions from the marginalized group" (p. 49).

Octavia and Coloson portray the racial conflicts between white individuals and people of colour. Octavia, for instance, sheds light on the masculine biases prevalent in commercial depictions of memory, while Colson illustrates how African Americans seem doomed to atone for past wrongs, with their descendants perpetually caught in a cycle of repeating their forebears' errors, as though ensnared by an unending generational curse that awaits elusive acts of redemption (The Intuitionist, p. 31). This study explores the emotional realities of people of colour as recounted by these memoirists, particularly focusing on their encounters with these "racial curses" during the Black Lives Matter Movement.

Although many believed that Barack Obama's presidency signaled the advent of a "post-racial America" (Tesler & Sears, 2010), ethnic and racial minorities still face race-related stress and discrimination (Sue et al., 2007). Most academics concur that during the 1960s, overt racial discrimination has been less common and less severe (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; McConahay, 1986; Steele, 1997; Sue et al., 2007). However, people of colour and queer women of colour continue to be impacted by a more subdued kind of racial prejudice known as racial microaggressions (Omi & Winant, 1994; Sue et al., 2007a,). Although these studies provide valuable insights, they do not specify which racial groups are subjected to particular types of microaggressions or during what periods, a gap this study seeks to fill. Furthermore, it has been proposed that these every day, often ambiguous derogatory messages may have more profound psychological impacts than overt discrimination (Solorzano et al., 2000), with the subtle nature of microaggressions including the unconscious harbouring of negative sentiments and stereotypes about historically marginalized groups (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000).

African American writers have employed literature to address the ongoing racial oppression and violence faced by people of colour, illustrating its effects on identity formation. However, there is limited research on how racial oppression is depicted in the memoir genre. This study addresses that gap by examining racial marginalization within memoirs. Apostolos (2023) argues that Colson Whitehead's novel *The Nickel*

Boys: A Novel (2019) represents the African American experience by highlighting the suffering and hardships endured by black boys at the hands of white supremacists and the detrimental effects on those who internalize societal racial norms. However, Forman (1997) notes that, speaking for his Black community, hardship is a necessary part of existence, however the kind of difficulty a person experiences affects their psyche. I have often desired that our battle might be in some way less painful and emotionally convoluted (p. 75).

These observations emphasize the challenges faced by people of colour in America, while revealing the various dimensions of oppression associated with each individual case. According to Lewis (2017), the way that gender and race are constructed in modern America places labels and statuses on people, which encourages oppression (p. 25). Additionally, Rosenblum & Travis (1996) propose that people are not limited to a single socially constructed status but rather can embody multiple ones (p. 1), indicating that a person's components of societal status are inseparable; the combination of gender and race categories produces a particular mixture of discrimination, oppression, and stereotypes (Lewis, 2017, p. 25).

Focus is narrowed by Crenshaw (1991), who examines double discrimination against women of colour. According to her explanation, social authority uses gender, race, and other identity categories as inherently harmful frameworks to marginalize or exclude those who are different (p. 1242). Racial microaggressions in everyday life also involve certain attitudes adopted by white Americans to devalue or underestimate blacks and other minorities, an element that occurs when, intentionally or unintentionally, people of colour are ignored or discriminated against. This study sought to unravel the underlying reasons for this behaviour and why the image of these interactions remains blurred, particularly regarding what informs micro aggressive behaviour.

The review above has shown that several studies have illuminated aspects of racial contestations since the slavery period. However, it has also been observed that there are few studies on the presentation of racial debate in the memoir genre.

2.3 Critical Reception of *Me and White Supremacy*

The memoir genre, often employed by marginalized voices, serves as an effective medium for critically reflecting on identity deconstruction and offering alternative narratives on race relations and cultural negotiations. The rise in popularity of this genre can be traced back to the memoir boom, which sparked academic interest in various forms of life writing (Smith & Watson, 2010, p. xii). memoirs also introduced new narrative possibilities for those traditionally excluded from the literary sphere, establishing the genre as a democratic form of writing that gives voice to disenfranchised groups, such as the racially marginalized, a phenomenon explored in this study. Additionally, the memoir genre is particularly well-suited for articulating issues related to race, gender, class, politics, and religion.

Layla F. Saad's memoir, *Me and White Supremacy*, authored during the Black Lives Matter Movement, functions as a personal anti-racism guide aimed at informing individuals with white privilege about the mechanisms of systemic racism (DiAngelo, 2018). Unlike autobiographies, contemporary memoirs shift the focus away from purely personal narratives and often delve into broader subjects, frequently linked to the intricate histories of the author's communities or affiliations, even if approached critically or with ambivalence (Sanudo, 2022). This perspective is particularly significant for writers like Saad, who come from marginalized backgrounds and frequently examine the impact of their efforts to move away from their origins while striving to assimilate into the predominantly straight, white, and normative American middle class. Saad's work includes clarifying concepts such as "white centering," which denotes the assumption that white culture, values, and norms are the universal standard (Deggans, 2020).

Saad's memoir highlights how space and emotions play a crucial role in illustrating the transcultural and intersecting dimensions of diasporic and gendered identities (Sanudo, 2022, p. 198). Moreover, Seffer (2015) discusses the rise of the memoir as a genre due to its ability to provide new narrative opportunities for voices traditionally excluded from the literary landscape. She argues that the memoir, as a democratic form of writing, is particularly adept at addressing issues of class, race, gender, religion, and politics (p. 50).

The process of recalling and documenting one's life narrative goes beyond just preserving historical events; it is essentially a cultural activity of continuous self-creation (Brockmeier, 2015). Additionally, each day's reading of *Me and White Supremacy* offers white and white-passing individuals the chance to examine and confront the subtle and overt ways they have participated in, perpetuated, and been complicit in the maintenance of white supremacy (Tangen, 2021).

Several scholars suggest that throughout her memoir, Saad raises critical questions about race. Haynes (2020) notes that Saad's book encourages readers to engage in self-reflection through daily journaling in response to prompts such as, what have you learned about your white privilege that makes you feel uncomfortable? and in what ways have you been apathetic when it comes to racism? In the foreword to the text, literary critic Robin Diangelo argues that many white people are reluctant to confront racial prejudice against people of colour if doing so requires any inconvenience or discomfort (Saad, 2020, p. 11). Diangelo's claims are consistent with the publisher's, who claims that Me and White Supremacy shows readers how to break down their own privilege and lessen the harm (often unintentional) they cause to people of color while also empowering them to improve the lives of other white people.

This study asserts that *Me and White Supremacy* revives the ongoing debate about racial history in America. Latham (2020) observes in her review that Saad's work calls for a new kind of leadership and accountability, which are essential for the healing that many people and communities so desperately need.

In contrast, some scholars argue that *Me and White Supremacy* should not be viewed solely as an anti-racism tool. Melissa (2020) in a review for the *Boston Review* on Race, contends that the genre of antiracist nonfiction aims to educate white readers about race but does not always incorporate the more powerful critiques from the black radical tradition. She further explains that *Me and White Supremacy* begins with the premise that white supremacy is partly defined by "epistemicide"—the erasure or suppression of knowledge systems. Diangelo's foreword suggests that for newcomers to the conversation on race, the initial question is not "What should I do?" (As they might inadvertently make mistakes or hinder progress) but rather "How have I managed not to know?" This perspective emphasizes the importance of epistemic de-

linking, while also illustrating how black suffering is often translated into a learning experience for white audiences. Moreover, many of Saad's prompts recall those used by Tia Cross, Freada Klein, Barbara Smith, and Beverly Smith in their 1980 work on face-to-face, day-to-day racism in critical race, which asked participants to reflect on their memories of race and racial differences from childhood, adolescence, and their experiences as feminists.

2.4. Critical Reception of *When They Call You a Terrorist; A Black Lives Matter Memoir*

The memoir serves as a crucial framework for examining how identity is fluid, evolving throughout an individual's life and varying across different contexts. Baena (2013) claims that we may fully comprehend the role of the memoir as a potent symbolic form and as a genre of identity building because we recognize autobiographical acts as deliberate creative and literary exercises (p. 200).

In America, branding black individuals as terrorists is deeply connected to racial oppression. Reena (2016) notes that, amidst rising violence and racial unrest, the White House reacted to an online petition that called for the federal government to officially label the Black Lives Matter Movement as a "terrorist group." This characterization of "terrorism" — defined as the use of violence and intimidation for political ends — parallels the criteria used to designate groups like ISIS as terrorist organizations.

The release of the memoir coincides with the Black Lives Matter Movement. Jenniffer (2018) highlights in the *New York Times Book Review* that the memoir frames the Black Lives Matter Movement, with the subtitle "A Black Lives Matter Memoir" reflecting only part of its content, while the final section of the book covers the movement's origins in 2013, when Khan-Cullors, together with Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi, coined the term following George Zimmerman's acquittal for the 2012 shooting of Trayvon Martin. The review further highlights that much of the book focuses on Khan-Cullors's early life, where she grappled with shame and sadness, which kept her in a more private world of confusion and pain. According to Dawn (2018), the book traces a path from black people's poverty and governmental brutality against them—which is seen as an insult for just "being alive"—to empowered

activism and social transformation. As Khan-Cullors matures, her experiences mold her views, making her see how society's emphasis on safety often uses those with darker color to make excuses.

Additionally, Khan-Cullors reflects on the guilt she experienced as a child due to her inability to speak out against racial injustice. The memoir, represents a blueprint for how that silence evolved into a "scream" heard around the world. Reena concludes that the book emerges at a time when women are demanding to be heard, illustrating the systemic barriers African Americans face and the constant threats from law enforcement, governmental bodies, and institutions designed to safeguard but instead subjugate.

According to Motley (2021), Patrisse Khan-Cullors shares personal tales that inspired her to advocate for black communities, which brought her and co-author Asha Bandele together. Although many Americans may find ideas like redlining, racial profiling, and mass imprisonment abstract, Cullors & Bandele have personally seen the negative effects of these and other anti-black practices. Cullors describes the incarceration of her brother Monte and her father Gabriel, depicting the harsh realities of these institutions and their inadequate service to black Americans. She attributes these issues to the American tradition of devaluing and regulating black bodies (Coates, 2015; Douglass, 2017).

Motley also notes that the memoir addresses the interplay of racial identities with gender and sexual identities. Cullors identifies as a queer black woman and candidly discusses how these identities impact her personal and community relationships. Moreover, Browdy (2019) emphasizes that *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir* utilizes black feminist rhetorical theories, leveraging storytelling as a response to the wrongful designation of her identity as a "terrorist." By means of storytelling, Cullors reaffirms her credibility, situates her narrative within the ongoing misrepresentation of black identity, and carves out space for marginalized black experiences, all while advocating for social action and transformation.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in post-colonial theory, utilizing the concept of Orientalism as proposed by Edward Said. Said investigates the dynamics within countries that were once colonies or remain under colonial influence. He contends that Orientalism is grounded in several fundamental principles, emphasizing the erroneous depiction of the East crafted by western adventurers, writers, literary figures, thinkers, and political analysts. Said argues that Orientalism represents a mindset established upon an ontological and epistemological divide between 'the Orient' and 'the Occident,' while also criticizing the literary sphere for its disdain toward Eastern cultures and its perpetuation of depreciatory stereotypes propagated by European intellectuals (Bressler, 2010, p. 204). This theory is crucial for examining the labels and stereotypes imposed on the 'other' as reflected in the memoirs *Me and White Supremacy* and *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir.*

Additionally, the research utilizes Edward Said's strand of Orientalism to emphasize the marginalization experienced by people of colour in contrast to white individuals. Said argues that colonizers, by constructing unjust narratives about colonized countries, expose their greed for exploitation, wealth, and power. This study investigates how white supremacy perpetuates prejudice against others. Said points out that the colonial powers, driven by paternalistic arrogance, create binary oppositions between themselves and the colonized, facilitated by dominant cultural and political ideologies and Eurocentric perspectives. According to Said, the legacies of colonialism continue to manifest in chaos, coups, corruption, bloodshed, civil wars, and violence. This assertion is supported by Gikunda et al. (2021), who state:

> "Violence in a colonial state is viewed in the context of the imperialist´s Attempt to impose their rule through it. This suggests that violence of the oppressed is enacted as reactive to the violence of the oppressor. It is a reaction to the colonized condition and therefore part of the attempt of the colonized to effect decolonization and liberation. If the violence of the oppressed is an attempt to realize freedom, then the violence of the colonizer represents an effort to preserve the colonial oppression condition (p. 58)."

Similar to the arguments presented by these scholars, this study explores the violence, prejudice, and oppression experienced by people of colour through mass incarceration, an unjust criminal justice system, and killings. Said emphasizes that

colonizers view themselves as fundamentally different from the colonized, justifying their rule over others. He suggests that the colonized become 'the other,' a concept aligned with this study's focus on how white privilege harms marginalized groups. Said argues that binary oppositions created by those in power should be dismantled, and to achieve this, one must be aware of colonial discourse. Colonial discourse examines how colonialism and colonization construct both colonizing and colonized subjects, revealing the deep ambivalence involved (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2000, p. 15).

Thus, Orientalism will be integral to this study, providing a critical framework for analysing how white supremacists dominate and exert power over the marginalized.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Location

The study was conducted at the Chuka University Library in the post graduate room.

3.2 Research Design

Me and White Supremacy and *When They Name You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir* provide perspectives on racial tensions during the Black Lives Matter Movement. This study used a qualitative research approach to investigate these perspectives. Mugenda (2013) and Marshall & Rossman (2011) assert that the goal of qualitative research design is to comprehend human behaviour and the causes of it. To ascertain how racial contestations are portrayed in the memoir genre, an examination of source texts was conducted.

3.3 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study employed purposive sampling, selecting texts based on their genre and publication period. This method is beneficial as it allows for the selection of particularly rich and relevant cases for detailed examination (Patton, 2002). The memoirists were chosen due to their significant engagement in the Black Lives Matter Movement and their activism on Anti-blackness through their literary contributions. Layla F. Saad's notable works include, *I need to talk to spiritual white women about White Supremacy (part one*), her podcast, *The Good Ancestor*, and her Memoir, *Me and White Supremacy*. Patrisse Khan-Cullors' works sampled include *Power: From the Mouths of the Occupied*, *The Future of Black Life*, and *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter* Memoir.

The texts chosen for this study are *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter* Memoir and *Me and White Supremacy*. These works were chosen for their thematic relevance and their publication in the Black Lives Matter Movement. *Me and White Supremacy* was published in the year 2020 while *When They Call You a Terrorist; A Black Lives Matter Memoir* was released *in* 2018.

3.4 Research Instruments

The study utilized a literature review matrix tool, a theoretical framework matrix, and analysis of relevant critical works to collect information, while cognizant of the importance for research instruments to capture each variable according to its conceptual or theoretical definition (Polit & Beck, 2012).

3.5 Methods of Data Collection

As a qualitative study, data acquisition involved close textual readings of the selected texts and recording key points related to racial contestation in the memoir genre, along with any supportive evidence. Library research further supported the study by examining data on the presentation of racial perspectives in memoirs during the Black Lives Matter Movement, as well as relevant theoretical writings. Additionally, essential secondary materials such as journals, conference papers, e-books, internet sources, articles, periodicals, dissertations, and print books were critically reviewed.

3.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data collected from the sources mentioned was subjected to content analysis, with data categorized according to the study's objectives. Textual analysis was conducted in conjunction with the tenets of Orientalism. Chapters One, Two, and Three introduced the study, reviewed related literature, and outlined the methodology. Chapter Four examined the memoiric techniques in the texts under study, focusing on how racial contestations are presented during the Black Lives Matter Movement and how the memoir frames the 'other' through lenses of inferiority. The subtle ways in which the dominant group constructs hegemony during the Black Lives Matter Movement and the subsequent racial reception by the other was addressed in Chapter five. Chapter Six summarized the findings from Chapters Four and Five, made conclusions, and proposed directions for future research, emphasizing that racial contestations have persisted through various periods in American history, driven by the presence of white supremacy

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The research proceeded on the basis of ethical clearance from Chuka University Research and Ethics Committee and a Research Permit from National Commission of Science, Technology and innovation. Since this research was library-based and did not involve interviews or direct interaction with individuals, all texts were carefully read and appropriately referenced to avoid plagiarism.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE MEMOIRIC TECHNIQUES

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter interrogates the techniques of presentation in the memoir genre, namely, the truth, emotional journey, first person narrative voice, journaling and uniqueness vs similarity. The main argument is that the memoir unlike fictional approaches illustrates how the narrator endured incidents in real life situations hence shaping his or her perceptions and reception towards these encounters.

4.2. The Memoir

A memoir is a narrative written from the author's perspective about a significant part of their life. Though subjective, it primarily focuses on factual details—who, what, when, where, why, and how—of specific periods or incidents (Dukes, 2024). Donlon (2020) asserts that ´we are a constructive species; we construct our niches, knowledge, habitat, memories, and even our relative truths´ (p.2). These insights emphasize the importance of understanding the memoir genre before embarking on its analysis.

Donlon further contends that memoirs merge elements of both fiction and nonfiction to craft narratives that are factually precise, relying on the truth conveyed through diverse methods. He notes, ´There seems to be no end to the forms a memoir can take; personal experiences can be packaged as stories about food, travel, survival, redemption, or other topics akin to good fiction´(p.3). This study therefore, examines racial contestations as a key theme in the memoirs under review.

When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir, co-authored by Patrisse Khan-Cullors and Asha Bandele, is a deeply poetic and impactful examination of the experience of being a black woman in America and the founding of a movement advocating for justice in a nation that claims to be free. Raised in a low-income neighbourhood in Van Nuys by a single mother, Cullors personally faced the racial discrimination and maltreatment suffered by people of colour at the hands of law enforcement and a criminal justice system that upholds hegemonic biases. Cullors identifies black individuals as the most vulnerable group in America, which comprises a substantial segment of the population of colour. After the acquittal of

Trayvon Martin's killer in 2013, Cullors's outrage, alongside Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi, led to the creation of Black Lives Matter. Despite being labelled as terrorists and threats to America, these three women launched a movement demanding accountability from authorities who persistently overlook the injustices faced by people of colour. Although for many American children, childhood represents a time of innocence and safety. However, Cullors's early years were characterized by poverty and constant police presence in Van Nuys. Her upbringing in 1990s Los Angeles mirrored the experiences of many Black children. Her mother, Cherice, juggled multiple jobs but struggled to support her family. Cullors describes living in one of ten Section 8 apartments within a deteriorating two-story building, where peeling paint, an unreliable gate, and a malfunctioning intercom system were commonplace. For over a year, they went without milk for their cereal due to a broken refrigerator that the landlord refused to replace. Amid this poverty, Cullors and her siblings faced a persistent police presence in their neighbourhood. While white communities often view the police as protectors, Cullors quickly learned that their role in black communities was to harass and control.

Cullors recounts an incident from when she was nine years old, alongside her older brothers Monte and Paul, aged eleven and thirteen, respectively. Lacking green spaces, community centers, or playgrounds, they used an alleyway as their secret play area. However, the police frequently arrived, forcing her brothers and their friends to lift their shirts and undergo intrusive searches. Cullors describes her own experience of being handcuffed and arrested at twelve on suspicion of possessing marijuana, a humiliation she endured in front of her classmates. She also shares the trauma of her brother Monte, who was imprisoned, tortured, and later diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder. Patrisse argues that in the 1990s, merely being black or mexican was enough to be labeled a gang member or a dangerous criminal involved in drugs.

The memoir further highlights how gang statutes in America were so broadly written that they allowed police to categorize individuals as gang members based on appearance, location, and associations, without requiring evidence or formal charges. This led to racial profiling that disproportionately affected young people of colour. despite the presence of white gangs, no California gang injunctions have targeted such

groups. These experiences, Culllors notes, motivated her to envision the Black Lives Matter Movement. She expresses her fury and sorrow following the murder of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, recounting that after the tragedy, a diverse group of 15 individuals committed to eradicating white supremacy and creating a world where all children can flourish held large rallies in New York to demand justice for Trayvon Martin. She notes that the statistics are alarming: in California, a person is killed by a police officer approximately every 72 hours, with 63% of these victims being black or latinx, while black individuals, who make up 6% of California's population, are killed at five times the rate of white individuals and three times the rate of latinx individuals, who experience the highest number of police-related deaths. Cullors questions, "Who is protected? Who is served?"(p.139).

In the final chapter, titled "When They Call You a Terrorist," Cullors recounts her efforts to support a law that would prevent children from being imprisoned for possessing marijuana. However, as she anticipated celebrating her success, it became evident that Donald Trump was going to win the 2016 presidency—a man who, according to Cullors, openly campaigned on bigotry, white supremacy, and misogyny. Although Cullors, Alicia, and Opal Tometi built a vibrant national network of organizers, their top priority in Los Angeles County was to stop the construction of a $3.5 billion jail. Cullors mournfully asserts that ´people of colour represent a neglected generation, overlooked due to the effects of the war on drugs, gang issues, mass incarceration, and criminalization´(p.185).

Cullors & Bandele end the memoir with a message of perseverance and optimism. Cullors contemplates that if anyone were to label her child or any child she cares about as a terrorist, she would embrace them and explain that true terrorism involves being watched and harassed merely for existing. She underscores the ability to transform not only oneself but also the world, affirming that everyone has unique gifts yet to be discovered and embodies what genuine love and a world where black lives truly matter look like.

Saad's text, *Me and White Supremacy*, originated from a 28-day Instagram challenge intended as a personal tool for anti-racism. This guide is designed to help those with white privilege understand systemic racism and how to avoid perpetuating white

supremacy. Saad's approach includes defining concepts such as "white centering," which is the belief that white culture and its values are the central reference point for everyone. The memoir encourages readers to keep a journal and confront challenging questions, such as "How has your white privilege shielded you from negative experiences throughout your life?" The book begins with a foreword by Robin Diangelo, a critical race theorist, who characterizes it as "a compassionate gift from a brilliant black woman who offers guidance through an in-depth exploration of white racial conditioning for your liberation" (Diangelo, as cited in Saad, 2020, p. xvi). Structured as a 28-day guide divided into four weeks for white readers, the Memoir aids in identifying the effects of white privilege and white supremacy. In an introductory letter to the reader, Saad inquires about their initial reaction to the book's title: ´whether they felt surprised, confused, or intrigued´(p.15).

The bulk of Saad's readers and podcast listeners are in North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. She starts by summarizing her intersecting identities and experiences as a black woman of East African descent who has lived in Britain and is currently residing in the Middle East. Despite this, she shares her work with a global audience (p. 19). Despite addressing white supremacy—a subject primarily impacting people of colour—Saad faces inevitable white fragility as a black muslim woman. She defines white supremacy as a racist ideology asserting that white people are superior to other races and should thus dominate them. The first week of the memoir covers fundamental aspects of white supremacy. Day 1 focuses on "You and White Privilege," Day 2 on "You and White Fragility," Day 3 on "You and Tone Policing," Day 4 on "You and White Silence," Day 5 on "You and White Superiority," Day 6 on "You and White Exceptionalism," and Day 7 reviews the week.

In Week 2, Saad addresses topics such as antiblackness, racial stereotypes, and cultural appropriation. She critiques the notion of "colour-blindness," or the idea that ignoring race will eliminate racism, as a disingenuous white perspective. Quoting Bonilla-Silva, Saad contends that many white individuals place the blame for racial issues on minorities. They publicly criticize black people for allegedly "playing the race card," for seeking race-based programs like affirmative action, and for accusing whites of racism when confronted. On Day 9, Saad explores "You and Antiblackness Against Black Women," while Days 10 and 11 cover "You and Antiblackness Against

Black Men" and "You and Antiblackness Against Black Children," respectively. Day 12 discusses "You and Racist Stereotypes," noting that while people of colour can have prejudices against whites, they cannot be racist towards them because racism involves prejudice combined with power, allowing the dominant racial group to negatively affect others across personal, systemic, and institutional levels.

Day 13 explores "You and Cultural Appropriation," which is defined as when a more dominant culture appropriates or uses another culture for its own gain. According to Saad, cultural appropriation upholds the idea held by white supremacists that white people may appropriate aspects of black or brown cultures because they are "exotic" and that doing so improves white people's own experiences. Week 3 begins with the concept of allyship, which Saad defines as the active, consistent practice of unlearning and reevaluating, where a person of privilege works in solidarity with marginalized groups. Day 15 addresses "You and White Apathy," Day 16 "You and White Centering," Day 17 "You and Tokenism," Day 18 "You and White Saviorism," Day 19 "You and Optical Allyship," and Day 20 "You and Being Called Out/Called In."

Saad recounts receiving frequent questions from white listeners about whether her podcast was intended for them. On Day 19, "You and Optical Allyship," Saad describes an invitation from a white woman to speak at a spiritual women's festival in the UK during the live #MeAndWhiteSupremacy Instagram challenge. When Saad's team asked if the woman was participating in the challenge, the response was negative, and the organizers lacked relevant policies. Saad concludes that the woman used flattery and claimed allyship to invite her, but when questioned about protections for her as a black woman, the organizers had no solutions—an example of superficial allyship.

Saad wraps up Week 3 by discussing the fear of being called out or called in, which she views as a major deterrent to genuine anti-racism work. The fear of making mistakes and facing criticism can lead to perfectionism and result in white fragility, tone policing, white silence, white exceptionalism, white apathy, tokenism, and superficial allyship. The final chapter, Week 4, addresses themes of power, relationships, and commitments. Day 22 covers "You and White Feminism," Day 23 "You and White Leaders," Day 24 "You and Your Friends," Day 25 "You and Your

Family," Day 26 "You and Your Values," Day 27 "You and Losing Privilege," and Day 28 "You and Your Commitments."

In her concluding remarks, Saad emphasizes that dismantling the longstanding system of oppression and marginalization requires a collective effort. She urges white readers to choose between allowing white supremacy to use them, as it did their ancestors, to harm and marginalize people of colour, or to actively work to dismantle white supremacy within themselves and their communities, enabling people of colour to live free from racism and oppression.

4.3 Truth Matters; the Memoir

We are shaped by the narratives we encounter, whether they are read, recited, digitally experienced, or delivered through the voices of our ancestors, reflecting societal norms. These stories, in whatever format, are fundamental to our identities, forming the basis upon which we create new narratives rooted in truth (Heilbrun, 2008). This viewpoint suggests that sharing personal experiences is a universal human practice. People are often driven to tell their stories for reasons such as emotional relief, survival, or to address injustices. This drive has contributed to the emergence of the memoir genre in America, providing a new narrative space for voices traditionally excluded from the literary mainstream. memoirs present a democratic form of writing that uncovers human truths.

Modern memoirs focus less on individual experience and more on the intricate histories of the communities to which the author is connected, often in a critical or ambivalent manner (Sanudo, 2022), a perspective that aligns with Francesco (2020), who highlights that the Black Lives Matter Movement seeks to advocate for victims of social injustice, police misconduct, and racism that has been overlooked by society and authorities´ (p. 12). Cullors and Bandele articulate this sentiment: "Like many of the individuals who represent our movement, I have experienced the twin terrors of poverty and law enforcement throughout my life." ... the neighborhoods in which a large number of Black Lives Matter activists have lived and loved were declared battle zones, with us being the enemy (p. 14).

Cullors & Bandele expose a historical reality about how people of colour in America have been branded as criminals or terrorists. Aware of these labels, the authors intensify their call for liberation, with the memoir serving as a medium for self-discovery. Similarly, Austen (2003) reflects on the motivations for writing memoirs. Like Cullors & Bandele, she feels a compelling need to mentally revisit the past through writing to better understand her present self. Austen argues that everyone has the right to write a memoir because it is essential to make sense of one's inner experiences (p. 788).

Memoir writing involves a dialogic truth between the author and the reader. Saad emphasizes this by stating: ‘To engage in this work, you need three things: Truth, Love, and Commitment. Regarding Truth,’ she asserts:

> This is truth work. tell the truth, as deeply as you can.no side-stepping or surface skimming. The more you tell the truth, the deeper this work takes you. What you will get out of this work is what you put into it. If you stay at the surface, what you receive from this work (and consequently what you will put out into the world as antiracist practice) will be surface level. If you go deep, if you tell the real, raw ugly truths so you can get to the rotten core of your internalized white supremacy, you will be beyond transformational. (p.26)

Truth is a fundamental element in memoir writing, as creative nonfiction involves narrating a true story compellingly, grounding it in personal experiences while utilizing the principles of creative writing to shape the narrative. Saad calls for those engaged in antiracism to face difficult truths to confront internalized white supremacy. This underscores the pursuit of a deeper understanding through personal experience, despite the challenges of writing about one’s own life. Baker (1982) notes, "the challenge for biographers and memoirists is their extensive knowledge" (Zinsser, 1998, p. 38). Saad contends that effective antiracism practice can lead to significant personal transformation. When one is too close to the subject, it can be difficult to distinguish essential details or convey the emotional weight of memories. The creative aspect of memoirs should not distort the truth but should aid in structuring it into a compelling narrative. The fusion of literary artistry and personal truth results in a story that transcends mere fiction, becoming a narrative that belongs to the author, the reader, and the collective experience—transforming personal experiences into literary inspiration.

Readers of memoirs often seek genuine authorial confession. Zinsser (1998) asserts that the quality of memoir writing should be distinguished from other writing forms, with the focus being on the authenticity of the narrative (p. 5). Gutkind (2005) emphasizes that memoir writers must carefully consider the moral and ethical aspects of truth-telling in creative nonfiction (p. 2). This study suggests that a high-quality memoir is characterized by its clear purpose, a view supported by Zinsser, who further argues that "the essential component of a memoir is integrity of intention and meticulous construction" (p. 7). Saad concludes: If you do not fully embrace the truth, you deprive yourself of personal growth, deny people of colour genuine allyship, and demonstrate a lack of commitment to dismantling white supremacy within yourself and the broader world (p. 27).

In the quest for truth, memoirists face challenges such as self-deception, cognitive biases, memory fallibility, and narrative pressures. These factors can impede an unbiased and accurate interpretation of personal history. Helena (2021) questions whether memoirists should aim to tell the truth, and if so, what type, how much, and why. She suggests that the literary status of memoirs often requires a particular kind of truth (p. 64). Additionally, she highlights that it is not enough to merely recount experiences; ´readers expect memoirists to reflect on their significance, enabling them to engage in a meaningful dialogue with the author about the past, (p.69).

According to Saad, the goal of this work is to help you recognize the reality so that you may take appropriate action, not to make you feel ashamed.regardless of how unpleasant it is to realize your racism's hurt, remorse, and humiliation (p.2).In this passage, Saad urges readers to actively confront white supremacy rather than passively consuming the text,as the memoir writer captures the internal experiences of the past and their significance, achieving a form of non-fictional experiential truth or subjective truth. Saad laments the extensive pain endured by people of colour due to discrimination by white supremacists, pointing to a form of historical truth. Helena further clarifies that "historical truth refers to past events, while experiential truth encompasses how those events felt and were interpreted at the time and later" (p. 70).

Writing a memoir is comparable to bringing light to the shadows of past events. Rex (1963) revisits Augustine of Hippo's Confessions and reflects on how memories are not the events themselves, which have already passed, but rather the thoughts shaped by those memories. He explains that even though his boyhood no longer exists in reality, it persists in his memory, and when he recalls it and shares it with others, he is presenting that memory in the present moment (Rex, 1963, p. 18). Just as Augustine's reflections reveal, Plato saw the material world as a mere reflection of an ideal realm, considering physical objects as imperfect representations of perfect ideals. These representations aim to be as close to the ideal as possible but inevitably fall short, leading Plato to refer to them as mere shadows. Similarly, writing a memoir involves capturing the past as a shadow, with the challenge being to make that shadow as vivid and true to the memoir's goals as possible. In other words, writing brings light to the obscured aspects of memory (Erickson, as cited in Renza, 7).

A memoir strives to represent events that others may also have a stake in. Damian (2020) contends that "each genre imposes specific, explicit, and inherent requirements on both the writer and reader, creating a distinct agreement between them" (p. 25), referencing Couser (2012), who argues that "genre is significant"(p. 38), Cullors, together with Alicia and Opal, played a role in establishing a robust national network of courageous activists. Despite these efforts, she laments that "we are a neglected generation; even worse, we are a generation that has been disregarded. We have been abandoned by the drug war on gangs and by mass incarceration and criminalization" (p. 181). This situation highlights the plight of marginalized communities in America and raises Damian's question: "Why write a memoir? For what purpose?" He emphasizes that before making specific writing and editing decisions, it is crucial to address fundamental choices about voice and truth (Damian, 2020, p. 25). As part of the marginalized groups described, Cullors & Bandele portray a community that is rejected, marginalized, and labelled as criminals—a narrative intended to raise awareness about the experiences of people of colour.

Supporting this idea, Couser notes that "the memoir has surpassed autobiography as the preferred term for a particular type of narrative" (p. 42), especially those expressing subjectivity, as depicted by Cullors & Bandele. This study refers to it as otherized collective subjectivity. Sudjic (2019) points out that "when white

cisgendered men write about their personal experiences, they are seen as describing the universal human condition, and their perspectives are often considered universally applicable" (p. 44). According to Sudjic, Cullors & Bandele are sharing a universal narrative about the experiences of their community and the conditions imposed by white-centric viewpoints. Gornick (2002) aptly describes memoir writing as a revolutionary act:

> Everywhere in the world, women and men are rising up to tell their stories out of the now commonly held belief that one´s own life signifies, and everywhere, civil rights movement and the therapeutic culture at large have been hugely influential in feeding that belief in this country alone, forty years of liberationist politics have produced an outpouring of testament from women, blacks and gays that is truly astonishing. following quickly in the wake of political interpretation has come the echoing response of lives framed by pedestrian chaos: alcohol, domestic violence, sexual disorders. These too, it appears have a story to tell, a catastrophe to relate, a Memoir to write (p.45).

This viewpoint reinforces that a memoir captures human truths arising from personal challenges, communal hardships, and societal perspectives. For example, *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter* Memoir explicitly connects personal and political experiences, highlighting "ordinary chaos": Cherice's struggles following her husband's departure, the violence inflicted upon Cullors and her brother Monte by law enforcement, and the poverty and abuse faced by people of colour. This authenticity of a memoir is crucial for revealing the truth, a factor that empowers the memoirist to courageously tell their story. Such impactful memoirs find their place on bookshelves because their creators have managed to claim space in a world that might otherwise have been inaccessible without social change (Gornick, 2002). Cullors, for instance, drives social change through the Black Lives Matter Movement: "Alicia, Opal, and I helped establish a dynamic national network of courageous activists, and we must not give up. We are all working within our communities, and my top priority in LA County is halting the construction of a $3.5 billion jail. Even when I am most anxious for my family and my new baby, what motivates me to continue is our collective effort" (p. 183).

This reveals Cullors's dedication to implementing social change in the face of challenges. Gornick goes on to say that in order to write a testament, a person must first have lived a meaningful life. Additionally, he claims that if a person is a member of a minority group, their options in life are limited and struggle is an essential part of their experience (p. 47). Conversely, Couser (2012) asserts that "the memoir is presented and read as a nonfictional representation of actual human experiences" (p. 64), while De Man (1979) acknowledges that the memoir genre imposes unique demands on the writer: "Since genre encompasses both aesthetic and historical truth functions, it involves not only the distance between the author and their experience but also the potential convergence of aesthetics, truth, and history.

The commitment to such a convergence, especially in memoir writing, is substantial" (p. 65). It can be argued that both the writer and reader of a memoir share the goal of fostering empathy through truthful storytelling. In *Me and White Supremacy*, Saad addresses the concept of white privilege:

> White privilege describes the unearned advantages that are granted because of one´s whiteness or ability to ´pass´ as white. It is very important to note that white privilege is not a concept that is part of the natural order of life. In the absence of white supremacy, white privilege is meaningless. (p.37).

Saad observes that white privilege is a social construct rather than an inherent aspect of life. This perspective fosters a shared experience between her, as a black writer, and the reader, whether they are a person of colour or a white individual who benefits from white privilege. This aligns with the study's assertion that memoirs reflect diverse truths based on the racial identity of the reader, a shared sentiment that propels the narrative forward. Storytelling, as Chee (2018) points out, arranges facts such that the reader feels as if they are part of the writer's experience; if you are doing your job well, the reader will experience what you are experiencing (p. 72). This link enables the reader to evaluate the genuineness of the author's actions and their commitment to the autobiographical agreement, a concept Lejeune (1989) describes as "the autobiographical pact" (p. 81).

Saad further notes that white supremacy is the precursor to white privilege and without the former, racial prejudice might not be a topic of discussion. This may explain why she titled her book *Me and White Supremacy*—to encourage readers, especially white ones, to examine how white supremacy perpetuates racial conflicts. Lejeune's explanation of this agreement highlights its intricate, moral intersections: The agreement is based on literary tradition rather than legality. There is an unspoken agreement between the author and reader. This is not to say that memoirists cannot cross legal lines—quite the contrary. Rather, neither does the agreement guarantee factual truth on all fronts nor does it function as a legally binding contract. It only restates the author's identity in relation to the protagonist and narrator of the work (p. 83).

Saad recounts, "As a young black girl growing up in the Uk, I became aware of white privilege at a very early age. I remember being around seven when my mother discussed white privilege—or rather, my lack of it" (p. 8). This statement illustrates Layla's intention to present her personal experiences with white privilege. For a memoirist to credibly commit to truth-telling, they must first convince the reader of the authenticity of the "I" who narrates and stars in the story. Damian concludes, "This identity claim, as it pertains to memoir, shifts the central question from 'Is this true?' to 'Who am I?' or, since memoirs often focus on the past, 'who was I?' or even 'who could I have been?'" (p. 48). In Saad's case, she likely wants readers to perceive her experiences with white supremacy as influenced by her environment, religion, and race.

In memoir writing, the obligation to convey truth is paramount, as the genre exists within the realm of nonfiction. Cullors & Bandele, in the concluding chapter, examine the substantial impact of the Black Lives Matter Movement since its inception in 2013, emphasizing we have brought attention to and elevated the voices of black women—all black women—who are not only the most marginalized but also the most vulnerable, despite the fact that they are always fighting for equality and justice. We now have the room to fully embrace who we are and what it takes to be really free, not just somewhat free. We have achieved the ability to stand in our unadulterated truth. (p 184).

This statement emphasizes the double discrimination faced by black women and the necessity for activism to ensure their voices are heard. Stefanikova (2023) concurs, stating, "For African Americans, life-writing from slave narratives to contemporary works plays a crucial role in documenting the experiences and perspectives of marginalized and underrepresented groups" (p. 14). Thus, memoirs serve as essential tools for preserving history, culture, and empowerment, especially when women's voices have often been marginalized, as historical slave narratives were predominantly written by men (p. 14).

Luo Yi (2001) supports the above assertions arguing that African American life writings consistently exhibit "a desire to live as one chooses and a critical stance against external conditions limiting one's freedom" (p. 1). This study emphasizes that speaking truth to hegemonic power liberates others from racial prejudice. Cullors & Bandele's notion of "standing in our unedited truth" mirrors this concept, asserting that the memoir's legitimacy hinges on persuading readers of the narrator's truthfulness. They illustrate this with their experiences of past marginalization, redefining the identities of people of colour in a society that often renders them invisible.

Theorizing Black experiences in America is challenging. Saad questions what constitutes white superiority, observing, "White superiority derives from the belief that those with white or white-passing skin are inherently superior and thus entitled to dominate people with brown or black skin" (p. 57). She recounts receiving a hate email from a white supremacist, which exemplifies the extreme expressions of white superiority, Saracen We're going to have to prove the indisputable, holy reality of White Supremacy in a manner that will burn into your primitive mind forever because of Marxist sambo malcontents like you. Do you know what dark subhuman demons they worshiped or what primitive clicking proto language they spoke? No, You don't because we removed that dirt from you and pulverized it into the dust. When the time comes and the boot is on your neck, you will realize why we are taking this much from you. Just picture what we will take this time. Recognize that your hate speech makes today much closer. All we wanted to do was mow the grass. But we will not watch helplessly as you prepare to devour us, like you did in Rhodesia, the Congo,

Angola, and so on. Prepare yourselves, ungrateful, conceited n***** whore. (page 58).

The email, which includes extremely racist and anti-black rhetoric, vividly illustrates the brutal reality of white supremacy. The email's tone reflects a perspective of white supremacism contrasted with Saad's position as an oppressed individual. Hooks (1992) supports this view, arguing that from the standpoint of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, the exploitation of fantasies about the 'primitive' other reinforces the status quo (p. 22).

Further, Andrea (2016) discusses orientalism, defined by Said as the West defining itself as superior by constructing an inferior 'Orient.' This perspective positions Saad as an 'orient' who should not challenge white supremacy. Rabaka (2006) echoes this, noting that the 'civilized' (white) view themselves as the ultimate authors of human culture, often resorting to violence and manipulation to maintain their dominance (p. 11). Furthermore, Dubois's analysis in *The Souls of Black Folk* suggests that white supremacy goes beyond racial domination, robbing people of colour of their humanity and self-definition (p. 42).In reality, the terminology the (white colonial) settler employs when he discusses the native (the raced, or the colored) are zoological ones, as noted by Fanon (1963). The settler often makes reference to the bestiary when attempting to thoroughly and precisely characterize the original people (p. 42).

4.4. Memoir and the Emotional Journey

Memoir writing often involves exploring emotional fluctuations, where the writer seeks to comprehend their past self from the perspective of their current self. Sue (2009) argues that "for a memoir to be successful, it needs a narrative voice that examines a full range of human experiences and emotions" (p. 1). He further asserts that the 'I' in memoir serves as a literary tool to delve into and articulate complex emotions, a Narrative voice that reveals both the external journey (what happened) and the internal journey (the insights the writer gains from these experiences). Additionally, the concept of 'dual consciousness' (Double I/eye) represents the narrator's reflection on their past self ('I') and their current perspective ('eye') (p. 1).
Cullors & Bandele describe a profound historical and emotional journey of people of colour:

> And I knew it because I am the thirteenth-generation progeny of a people who Survived the hulls of slave ships, survived the chains, the whips, the months Laying in their own shit and piss. The human beings legislated as not human beings who watched their names, their languages, their Goddesses and Gods, the arc of their dances and beats of their songs, the majesty of their dreams, their very families snatched up and stolen, disassembled and discarded, and despite this, built language and honored God and created movement and upheld love. what could they be but stardust, these people who refused to die, who refused to accept the idea that their lives did no matter, that their Children´s lives did not matter? (p.g 12)

In this passage, Cullors & Bandele seem to illustrate a historically afflicted emotional journey of people of colour. despite being a descendant of those who endured slavery, the author persists in combating long-standing prejudices. This study raises a critical question: How does the narrator frame their emotional journey concerning the subject they address? The authors appear to highlight the resilience, demeanour, and determined resolve of people of colour towards advancing emancipatory ideologies, and as Sue further observes, "it is not uncommon, when studying a memoir, to question its epistemic status and its relationship to emotionality" (p. 2).

When Cullors discovers that her biological father is a recovering crack addict, similar to her brother Monte, who has started selling their mother's belongings for drug money, she links this to the lack of community resources for people of colour, such as playgrounds, parks, after-school programs, and healthcare facilities (p. 32).Her tone reflects frustration with a system that systematically discriminates against marginalized communities. This emotional intensity heightens the scene's impact, amplifying feelings of fear, betrayal, and helplessness experienced by people of colour while challenging both the narrator and the reader to confront these issues. Bruner (1991) proposes that "narration is a mental mode where we understand the actions of people (the narrator/protagonist) pursuing goals through plans that face challenges, referred to as the paradigmatic mode" (p. 1), involving various inferences used consecutively and allowing insights to be transferred from one mind to another.

Furthermore, Cullors & Bandele express uncertainty about the welfare of others when they state "they swim or motherfucking sink generation" (p. 32), possibly reflecting their experiential frustrations due to relentless subjugation by a predominantly white

system. Bruner adds that “the vicissitudes faced by the protagonist or narrator often evoke personal emotions…so readers also experience feelings of identification, sympathy, or other responses” (p. 1), defining vicissitudes as challenges without ready solutions, similar to Cullors & Bandele’s critique of the lack of employment or healthcare support for people of colour (p. 32). Thus, emotions in response to such challenges may drive creative responses, underscoring the significance of emotion for us (Averill & Nunley, 1992).

Memoirs deeply engage with various fields of literature by sharing personal narratives. Saad demonstrates this by leveraging the internet as a crucial tool for her antiracism initiatives while also addressing the personal emotional challenges she faces. Saad articulates:

> And as an adult on the worldwide internet, where more than 50% of the world´s population spends their time and where I do my work I am exposed to white supremacy every day. As someone who shares her work with a global audience, I face the inevitable white fragility that comes with being a black Muslim woman with a voice (p.9).

Through her podcasts, Saad advocates for antiracism, highlighting the emotional resilience required for her work. This study argues that the anonymity provided by the internet can facilitate the expression of social justice commitments and public antiracist positions, especially for those who may lack the courage to do so in offline settings. According to Reed & Connelly (2020) in their podcast segment "Behind the Mic" from *Me and White Supremacy*, listeners should be prepared with a pen and journal to engage with Saad’s 28-day examination of white supremacy. Connelly further discusses the emotional impact of Saad’s workbook, noting that recent updates have included additional personal and historical context to help listeners reflect on their experiences with white privilege and fragility.

Saad’s identification as a black muslim highlight what this study refers to as "double othering," with her statement "with a voice" indicating that women of colour are often expected to remain silent in the face of racial discrimination. Saad uses her podcasts to offer alternative perspectives for marginalized communities, providing a unique view into the lives and thoughts of her audience, while aligning with the confessional

nature of memoirs as described by Butler (2005), which involves sharing personal experiences, opinions, and ideas.

Saad questions, "who is this work for?" and explains, "It is important to understand that this work might evoke difficult emotions related to your marginalized identities and the oppression you've experienced within a system that only benefits you if you can pass as white and be anti-black. This work will likely bring up a range of conflicting emotions, including shame, confusion, fear, anger, remorse, grief, and anxiety" (pp. 24-25). Thus, Saad prepares readers for the emotional journey of antiracism, addressing the mixed feelings and anxieties that may arise, particularly for people of colour who have faced racial othering and those who benefit from an oppressive system by passing as white.

In an interview, Sam Sanders and Saeed Jones discuss the emotional journey of memoirists. Jones in the interview talks of his memoir *how we fight for our lives*, reiterating that as people of colour…´you know oppression is-wears us out in all kinds of ways and though people of colour have a voice, it is a struggle to express yourself'. When asked of the ´voice´ for the people of colour, Jones laments that ´but I think they got a voice, but struggle to get people to listen to you...you´re talking but it can often feel like you know, you are just talking in the void'. Although Jones argues that ´they got a voice´ i.e. the people of colour in America, he is apt to respond that for a memoir writer, it's a twilight trek to bring out the voice for them.

Dennison (2022) notes that memoirs explore the impact of being a person of colour within a racist social system, a system that limits educational and economic opportunities and undermines hope. Dennison adds that the despair seen in Ward's hometown reflects broader African American communities, where oppressive barriers seem insurmountable. Ward reflects, "I knew I lived in a place where hope and a sense of possibility were as fleeting as morning fog" (p. 34).

Research on life stories often aims to understand how individuals create meaning from personal experiences to form their narrative identities. Cullors contrasts her experiences in Van Nuys with those in the affluent Sherman Oaks neighbourhood, stating that this is not a neighbourhood where roots are supposed to take hold and

develop into everlasting trees; rather, it is intended to be temporary. There is just a 7-Eleven in my neighbourhood where I can purchase food. Without it, our neighbourhood wouldn't have somewhere to buy food or drink. That includes George's Liquor Store, the Taco Bell, and the little Chinese and Mexican fast-food restaurants. Sherman Oaks, an affluent white neighbourhood with large, ancient mansions with two-car garages, well-manicured lawns, and swimming pools that defy description, is located less than a mile away. One the size as a stamp beside our apartment complex. Nothing about Sherman Oaks seems less than exquisite and immaculate. Not even a few apartment buildings (p.16).

Cullors' comparison underscores the racial divide between her community and the affluent Sherman Oaks, highlighting the different realities experienced by people of colour and white residents. This contrast reinforces the idea that memoirs, blending factual storytelling with elements from fiction and poetry, offer profound emotional insights and a commitment to truthfulness, as noted by Caroline & Philip (2001).

The traumatic reconstruction of the past in memoirs reveals the evolving narratives of people of colour about their identities and experiences. McAdams & McLean (2013) emphasize that the most compelling memoirs inquire into the author's life and times, focusing on how and why life forces and shared experiences shape individual identities and the world. Suzanne (2006), quoting Richard Hoffman, argues that a memoir must explore how past and present converge to shape the future, including the experiences of both the living and the deceased. memoirists must confront grief, regret, and remorse to achieve a clear understanding of reality through truthful and detailed narrative. Forche & Gerald (2001) add that the memoir's creative act does not aim to provide a complete history but offers a personal testimony based on the writer's knowledge and experiences (Siegel, 2002).

In historical studies, memoirs often serve as valuable resources rather than conventional historical discourse, by blending dramatic narrative, essayistic, descriptive, and imagistic styles, and incorporating both factual testimony and fictional anecdotes, memoirs create intersections between historical and literary discourses,a method which effectively bridges the gap between public and private experiences, as well as personal and political spheres.

This study argues that memoirists portray the traumatic experiences of racial violence and police brutality, demonstrating how these events shape the lives of both the authors and the communities they represent. For example,Cullors recalls being "banished behind the broken black wrought-iron gate" at nine years old (Cullors & Bandele, 2018, p. 18). She recounts:

> It is from behind that gate that I watch the police roll up on my brothers and their friends, not one of whom is over the age of 14 and all of whom are doing absolutely nothing but talking. they throw them up on the wall. they make them turn out their pockets. they roughly touch my brother´s bodies, even their privates, while from behind the gate I watch, frozen. I cannot cry or scream. I cannot breathe and I cannot hear anything. Not the siren that would have been accompanying the swirl of red lights not the screeching at the boys: ´ get on the fucking wall! 'Later I will be angry with myself: Why didn't I help them? (p.19).

This passage illustrates the interplay between memory and imagination in crafting a narrative.Cullors describes how her memories disrupt the calm of her daily life by recalling historical experiences. The rhetorical question, "why didn't I help them?" captures her sense of helplessness at the time, which may have later inspired her to co-found the Black Lives Matter Movement. As Helena et al. (2018) suggests, emotions function as pivotal events linking the emotion-inducing incident (pre-event) with the event triggered by that emotion (post-event). In this context, the rhetorical question highlights the powerlessness experienced by Cullors and her brothers as marginalized individuals facing a brutal police force driven by a white-centered ideology.

Similarly, Klein (2015) describes how, as a Polish Holocaust survivor, her memories frequently resurface, contributing to her eventual integration of multiple historical and narrative worlds: Being alive is a great blessing as well as a terrible burden. I'll attempt to make sense of a few seemingly unrelated events that have become significant in my life, but I also hope that the suffering will eventually lessen and go away (p. 247).

Likewise, Cullors's suffering gradually lessens at the story's conclusion when she says: And I will say it to my lovely shine, or Malik, or Nisa, or Nina, or any of the kids and teens we love and support, that you are amazing beings of light. You are the embodiment of love and the potential for a society where everyone of our lives matters (Cullors & Bandele, 2018, pp. 186–187).

4.5 First Person Narrative Voice

A first-person narrator is a character within the narrative who shares events and experiences from their own perspective, using pronouns like "I," "me," and "my." This narrative approach allows readers to engage directly with the narrator's emotions, thoughts, and personal experiences, creating a close and immediate relationship (Feccomandi, 2024). memoirs often depict an internal transformation, highlighting how this change reshapes the narrator's view of the world. This indicates that the use of pronouns in memoirs often traces the development of a relational identity.Cullors & Bandele start their memoir with a first-person narrative, recalling how astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson explained that humans are made of stardust: And I am certain that deGrasse Tyson is speaking the truth because I have seen the magic and stardust we all possess in the lives of my ancestors since I was a little kid (p. 11).

From the beginning, Cullors emphasizes that her identity is unique, deeply rooted "in the lives of the people I come from." This subtlety hints at a sense of otherness. As they recount their memories, each narrator of colour offers readers firsthand experiences of racial trauma that challenge the conscience of white society. Feccomandi (2024) goes on to say that the common experiences that bind African American authors together as well as their experiences of sexual, racial, and social marginalization have created the beliefs and perspectives that are reflected in the works of many of these writers. In particular, the intricate relationships that authors have with their surroundings—communitas—and how these relationships help them to form unique identities despite the constant conflict between their own "I" and the "communitas" they feel a part of (p. 31).

Cullors & Bandele thus critique and challenge a white-dominated system that has marginalized people of colour, while encouraging the reader to engage metaphorically in this discourse. Scholars and readers often discuss the concept of 'identification' or use metaphors like 'closeness' and 'distance,' or 'putting oneself in a character's/narrator's shoes,' as a way to relate to the narrator or the fictional character. This viewpoint suggests that a memoir may have many identities. According to Neisser & Harsch (1992), people are influenced by more than only their prior experiences. A recollected incident becomes an example of autobiographical memory if it seems to have had a substantial impact on the rememberer's life. It may also help define the rememberer's identity and encourage the reader to identify with that version of themselves (p. 28).

A memoir presents a former self, the experiences of that self, and how that self-understood those events. Cullors & Bandele explain:

> I carry the memory of living under that terror-the terror of knowing that I, or any member of my family, could be killed with impunity- in my blood, my bones, in every step I take. And yet I was called a terrorist. The members of our movement are called terrorists. We, me, Alicia Garza and opal Tometi the three women who founded Black Lives Matter, are called terrorists. we, the people we are not terrorists I am not a terrorist I am Patrisse Marrie Khan-Cullors Brignac I am a survivor I am stardust (p.14).

This passage illustrates a present self that interprets the past experiences of being labelled as terrorists differently than how they were viewed by the past self. For people of colour, such as Cullors, her family, and the co-founders of Black Lives Matter, being labelled as terrorists is a narrative that is less clear-cut and more complex than fictional writing. Mura (2015) argues that "in such instances, the voice of the memoirist emerges in the gap between these two understandings, their contradictions, and differing portrayals," further stating that it is through exploring the differences between these two selves that memoirs attain a depth they might not otherwise achieve (p. 2).

Cullors delves into the memory of telling her story when she says, "I carry the memory of living under that terror, the terror of knowing that I or any member of my family could be killed with impunity," portraying a voice filled with hopelessness,

fear, and the experience of living under threat and racial marginalization. In line with this assertion, According to Freeman & Le Rossignol (2015), there are links between the consciousness of the "I" who recounts the tale and the authorial voice in narrative storytelling that draws and retains readers' attention in personal nonfiction. Furthermore, the pleasure of crafting a first-person narrative voice lies not only in its imaginative storytelling potential when working with authentic events, experiences, and memories, but also in crafting a character capable of nuance and introspection (p. 2).

According to Gerard (2005), the first-person narrative voice in a memoir frequently gains momentum not only from telling the story but also from the reflective intelligence that lies behind it, with the author acting as the narrator and considering the implications of the story—sometimes overtly, sometimes more subtly (p. 267). As a result, Cullors finds herself in an in-between space: living under the terror of being killed for being ‘the other,’ being labelled a terrorist, while simultaneously forming a revolutionary movement to ‘delabel’ people of colour. This implies that central to this investigation is one of the most difficult elements of first-person creative nonfiction writing—the possible conflict between the personal, introspective recording of factual occurrences and concepts, and the narrative's capacity to convert those experiences into compelling storytelling.

Writing from a first-person point of view entails crafting a narrative that encompasses the author's own experiences or views on others' lives. In this approach, the 'I,' representing the author in literary form, is present either directly or indirectly (Borich, 2013). On the other hand, Sala (2013) highlights the historical and literary links between 'confessional' writing and Memoir, tracing back to figures like Augustine and Rousseau. Sala argues that confessional writing reveals personal vulnerability, making it an effective method for establishing trust and connection with readers, who perceive the ‘vulnerable’ writer as sincerely open, sometimes to their own detriment. However, Sala notes that the term confessional might be contentious when applied to contemporary memoirs and suggests using terms like openness or honesty to describe the disclosure of human imperfections. Additionally, Sala posits that ´such candid first-person writing can diminish the authority of the memoirist, creating a sense of

vulnerability in the narrator and thereby enhancing the connection with the reader´ (p. 5).

It is evident from the above discussion that Cullors introspects through the repeated use of the first-person narrative voice, 'I.' memoirs are among the most intimate forms of writing, striving not only to recount past events but also to derive some form of meaning from them. Furthermore, memoirists often engage in self-exploration and reflection, transforming their personal experiences into Narratives that resonate with readers. As Eisenhuth & McDonald (2007) describe, a memoir can be seen as an "interrogation of consciousness" (p. 148). This study contends that the use of the first-person narrative voice lends reliability, trustworthiness, and functionality to a memoir.Saad, for instance, reflects:

> I do this work because white supremacy has negatively impacted how I see myself and how the world sees and treats me.I do this work because white supremacy will negatively impact my children and my descendants, how they see themselves and how the world will see and treat them. I do this work because I belong to the global family of the African diaspora and it hurts me that black people around the world are treated as inferior because of our skin colour. I do this work because people of colour everywhere deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, something that white supremacy strips them of. I do this work because I have a voice and it is my responsibility to use my voice to dismantle a system that has hurt me and that hurts people of colour every day. I do this work because I was called to it, and I answered that call (p.20).

From this passage, the study poses these inquiries: Is the narrator in a memoir merely a 'constructed persona,' or does the voice reflect the authentic and distinctive viewpoint of the author? Does the 'I' in the excerpt signify Saad's true self? Creating a first-person narrative involves shaping the writer-as-Narrator into a reliable voice. It is essential to understand what readers are actually responding to when they view a narrator as credible. Saad's voice speaks on behalf of the people of colour she represents, giving them a voice through her own narrative. This could either be a persona that projects 'reliability' or a style that resonates with readers (Gerard, 1996). While style plays a role, including how sentences are formed into paragraphs, it transcends mere style. Gerard comes to the conclusion that voice is what the reader hears in their head—a strong feeling that the story's words are coming from a

different, real-life human personality with a distinct viewpoint on events, basically from someone you can trust (p. 134).

Saad's tone shifts to one of lamentation when she asserts, "it is my responsibility to use my voice to dismantle a system that has hurt me and that hurts people of colour every day." Here, the voice in a memoir conveys tone, and a shift in tone alters the voice. Towards the end, Saad's tone becomes more bitter, reflecting her call to 'take responsibility' for combating white supremacy. Hart (2007) supports this by defining 'voice' as "the overall personality of the writer as perceived through the text" (p. 238). Perl & Schwartz (2014) add that it is "constructed from a mix of words, rhythms, and attitude," and that voice communicates a sense of intimate connection, a personality that might or might not be trusted (p. 56). They conclude that "voice is central to nonfiction, whether or not 'I' is used. If the voice is 'off,' the writer must adjust it" (p. 74).

Saad positions herself within the Narrative, and as Perl & Schwartz further argue, "the 'I' must be contextualized within the story being told: if readers find it too loud and self-centered, they become angry" (p. 62). Furthermore, in order to have a powerful voice, self-analysis is necessary, which calls for questions like "Who am I?" Why do I write? Particularly in long-form narrative writing, your identity and self-awareness become implicit components of your writing voice. It's like if you're sharing a tale with friends over dinner; during these exchanges, you're not self-conscious and you're not thinking about your editor.

In first-person narrative voice, telling a story involves balancing the needs of the audience and enlisting their cooperation.Cullors narrates with bitterness about her brother Monte being dragged into court on criminal charges despite being mentally ill, while the white people in court view him as though he were a sideshow attraction. "They look at him as though he is not a human being" (p. 93). She continues: I am overcome with a pervasive feeling of embarrassment and shame. I'm sorry to feel this way, but in front of those who despise us, all of our family's suffering is exposed. I make an effort to remain composed and express my love for Monte with my laser-focused gaze, even if the court won't let me say it aloud.I'm heading your way.Baby, I

won't allow them to take you.Please remain with me, Monte.Come along with me. (p 93).

This excerpt illustrates how the first-person narrative voice is essential in conveying a story. Cullors & Bandele effectively communicate to their intended audience (people of colour) about "the people who hate us." Through the first-person narrative,Cullors's frustration with the unjust criminal justice system becomes evident: "I try to stay centered, to say with my eyes, laser-focused on Monte, what the court will not allow me to say with my mouth." The concept of "narrative agency" addresses who is speaking and the identity of the narrative voice in a text (Jahn, 2005;). Genette (1972) explores the first-person narrative voice in terms of narrative discourse, although various narrative voices are acknowledged by these scholars. Traditionally, first-person and third-person narrative voices describe scenarios where a narrator recounts their own story or someone else's, respectively (Jahn, 2005). However, there is ongoing debate among theorists regarding the appropriateness of these terms, especially concerning the third-person narrative voice, which some find contentious and problematic (Chatman, 1978; Bal, 1997).

Lanser (1981) argues that "in reality, the narrator is only understood in the first-person sense—the I—and the S/he and it are essentially 'I'" (p. 157). The key issue is whether the first-person narrator is positioned within or outside the story world. Stanzel (1986) examines the nature of narrators and their connection to the narrated story, focusing on whether the narrator is relaying their own experiences or those of others (p. 4). Tredinnick (2011) claims that "the first-person narrative voice is integral to the form of the memoir" (p. 62).

This study argues that the space between the memoirist and the memoirist-as-narrator is essential for the memoir's authenticity. This gap enables creative composition, as the writer has full knowledge of the events before they are written. The narrative is then articulated by a specifically crafted narrator who guides the reader through a shared exploration, using the writer's personal experiences and viewpoint as the lens (Sala, 2013). However, if the distance between the writer and the writer-as-narrator is minimal, the writing may lack depth. On the other hand, if the distance is excessive and the writer-as-narrator delves into fictionalized memories and interpretations, it

risks undermining the narrative's credibility and artistic integrity. Such a situation could break the implicit 'contract' with the reader, who anticipates both artistic finesse and truth in the first-person narration. This balance indicates to the reader the type of truth being presented—whether it is the literal truth of events, emotional truth, hypothetical truth, approximate truth of memory, or insights guided by special understanding (Gerard, 1996, p. 123).

4.6 The Memoir and Journaling

A journal functions as a diary that meticulously records the daily activities of an individual or a place, emphasizing detailed accuracy to preserve truth (Munga, 2020). While a journal serves as a repository for experiences, knowledge, and ideas, Munga further asserts that, ´since a memoir is a collage of past experiences, a journal rejuvenates these memories by capturing the thoughts and feelings of the subject at a specific past moment´ (p. 79).

Saad asserts that *Me and White Supremacy* should be used as a self-guided journal to facilitate antiracism work: You should buy a diary to use for completing the daily journal prompts in this book, since it is intended to be read and worked through as well. According to Saad (p. 29), it is recommended that you revisit your journal comments and notes often while engaging in the ongoing, lifetime task of combating racism.

Saad emphasizes that a journal serves as a memorized reference record, reflecting the thoughts and insights gained after engaging with a particular work. Her book includes reflective journaling prompts at the end of each day during the 28-day Instagram challenge, with each week concluding with a review. This method aligns with the practices of other memoir writers, such as Anne Frank, Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, and many others who maintained journals throughout their lives. According to Williamson (2009), these writers documented life experiences, personal observations, poetic expressions, and emotional pain. ´Their journals not only provided an outlet for creative expression but also played a significant role in their self-actualization and life purpose ´(p. 1). Saad elaborates on this process on Day 7 of her challenge that If you have persevered through the challenge thus far, you will start to see a pattern in which all of these themes intertwine and weave in and out of one another. That is white

supremacist society's intricate weave.It goes beyond the simple black-or-white dichotomy of being a racist or not.Rather, a white supremacist worldview is composed of complex behaviours and ideas. Your self-perception and the way you see the world are intrinsically linked to your internalized ideas about racism. This book's introspective journaling questions are assisting you in realizing that. (page 68).

She Concludes the week with the following journal prompts:

> *Reflective journaling prompt*
>
> 1. *What have you begun to see and understand about your personal complicity in white supremacy that you were not able to see or understand before you begun this work?*

Through these reflective journaling prompts, Saad encourages the reader to realign their perspectives, beliefs, behaviours, and ideologies regarding white supremacy. The journaling prompts serve as thought-provoking exercises to challenge and dismantle erroneous views on white privilege and supremacy. Williamson further notes that a journal offers a convenient and safe space for expressing emotions, fostering critical thinking, and exploring creativity without the fear of peer judgment, rules, or regulations (p. 2). Reflective writing through journaling prompts can capture painful experiences, allowing the writer to gain narrative control, analyse the story objectively, and make sense of it (Deasey, 2024). Saad later presents the following reflective journaling prompts:

> *1.What have you begun to see that you cannot unsee?*
>
> *2.What have you begun to unearth about yourself when it comes to white supremacy?*
>
> *3.What have these last thirteen days (and specially the last six days) shown you about how white supremacy works through you?*
>
> *4.What have you learned about the dehumanizing ways you think about and treat people of colour and why?*
>
> *5.What have you learned about you and Anti-blackness?*
>
> (p.107-108)

By incorporating these journaling prompts, Saad aims to enhance the reader's ability to consider different perspectives. Reflective writing, as Williamson (2009) suggests, opens up new perspectives and provides answers to previously unanswered questions (p. 7). Bolton (1999) highlights the significance of keeping a journal, stating that writers are authorities on themselves, their experiences, knowledge, thoughts, feelings, memories, and dreams (p. 17). According to Thompson (2010), the primary focus of journaling is to develop intimacy with oneself. When life becomes unmanageable, writing down thoughts, problems, and impressions can be a powerful tool for expressing emotions and uncovering repressed feelings (p. 27). This means that, by examining repressed feelings, such as those prompted by the questions above, a white person might become aware of their internalized white supremacy.

The function of memory in memoir writing is intricate and adaptable.Cullors emphasizes the importance of journaling and memory in memoirs, recounting her encounter with her co-author Asha Bandele:

> I talk about it, our erasure, with black women journalists, including Akiba Solomon of *Colorines magazine*, who tells our mutual friend- and my co-author Asha Bandele. Asha worked with and for *essence magazine* for almost 15 years. ´tell me the whole story´, Asha says to me one day in late 2014. ´tell me what people are not hearing´. she takes down my thoughts, my memories, my history and turns them into a brief essay for my approval. Two months later, *essence* features a cover that for the first time in its history has no image, only the words BLACK LIVES MATTER.in it are the words this is the first time Alicia,Opal and I have our story told in a national publication and it should be no surprise that it is magazine dedicated to lifting up black women (p.164).

Through this process, Asha Bandele captures both the external and internal selves of Patrisse Cullors—the aspects that were previously unheard. There exists two selves in a memoir:´One is the self that others see, the social, historical person, with achievements, personal appearance, social relationships. These are real attributes of a person living in the world. But that is also experienced only by that person, the self that from the inside that the writer can never get ´outside of'. 'the inside´ or personally experienced, self has a history while it may not be meaningful as an objective ´history of the time', ´it is a record of self-observation not a history observed by others´ (Smith & Watson,2010).

In this context, Asha Bandele records Patrisse Cullors' internalized memories, thoughts, and histories of pain, subjugation, and othering. As these memories are documented, they gain significance, as seen when Cullors reflects, It comes as no surprise that the magazine is devoted to empowering Black women, since this is the first time Alicia, Opal, and I have had our story included in a major publication. Longo (2018) expands on this concept, explaining that memoirists often portray two distinct selves, emphasizing the separation between internal thoughts and the external environment. He contends that ´it is impossible to articulate all the thoughts that arise within a single day, much less over a lifetime. Instead, people instinctively filter which thoughts are suitable for expression and which should remain internal´ (p. 24).

For Cullors & Bandele, the act of writing gives voice to the frustrations experienced by people of colour. The traditional Western folklore's reliance on psychological essentialism supports the idea that memoir is influenced by societal factors. Longo also suggests that memoirists distill memories to their essence and then embellish them with varying degrees of dramatization and fiction, turning them into the foundation of a larger narrative and performance. memories thus transform into aspirations, molded to meet the expectations for something remarkable (p. 33). This transformation produces a new kind of truth, which Greg & Metzler (1994) term "narrative truth," in contrast to historical truth. Narrative truth helps preserve the integrity of past events while reinforcing the perceived continuity and coherence of the self. memoirs, intended for public consumption, are crafted to present the most compelling narrative possible. This endeavour highlights the impact of societal influences on memoir writing (p. 34). For Cullors, her recollections, histories, and the societal effects on people of colour inspired the Black Lives Matter Movement, with Asha Bandele documenting these elements.

4.7 Uniqueness vs Similarity

The memoir's distinctiveness from other literary genres lies in its capacity to fulfil two fundamental human desires: the desire to be known and to understand others—their struggles, joys, greed, or challenges—while focusing on factual experiences. This study raises essential questions: Why are memoirs so popular? What precisely defines a memoir? According to Smith (2018), There was a period when fiction dominated

the market. But nonfiction is just as fiercely competitive these days, and memoir is an important subgenre of it (p. 3).

Similarly, Almqvist (2020) poses critical questions: "how is it that memoirs are receiving more publicity than before? Or is it that a new kind of memoir is emerging—a type of memoir that was uncommon in the past, and which is now evolving aesthetically and artistically, in a way that allows it to compete with the novel?" (p. 71). Speculations about the reasons behind this newfound appetite for writing and reading memoirs, or life writing, are intriguing. Almqvist further suggests that "one answer to the above speculation is that the phenomenon of sharing on blogs, social media, and other self-publication platforms has encouraged the production, publication, and reading of personal memoirs " (p. 72).

Cullors & Bandele document how people of colour in America have been criminalized for choices often made out of absolute desperation or the lack of viable options. They highlight how platforms like Yahoo News played a crucial role in spreading distorted propaganda. An example they discuss is: Consider: in the wake of hurricane Katrina, there were two Getty images that yahoo news ran two days after the storm hit. In the first photo, two white residents waded through the water with food. two residents wade through chest deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans Louisiana. Right after it, they ran an image of a black boy also wading through the water with food. The caption read ´´A young man walks through chest-deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, August,30 2005 (p.110)

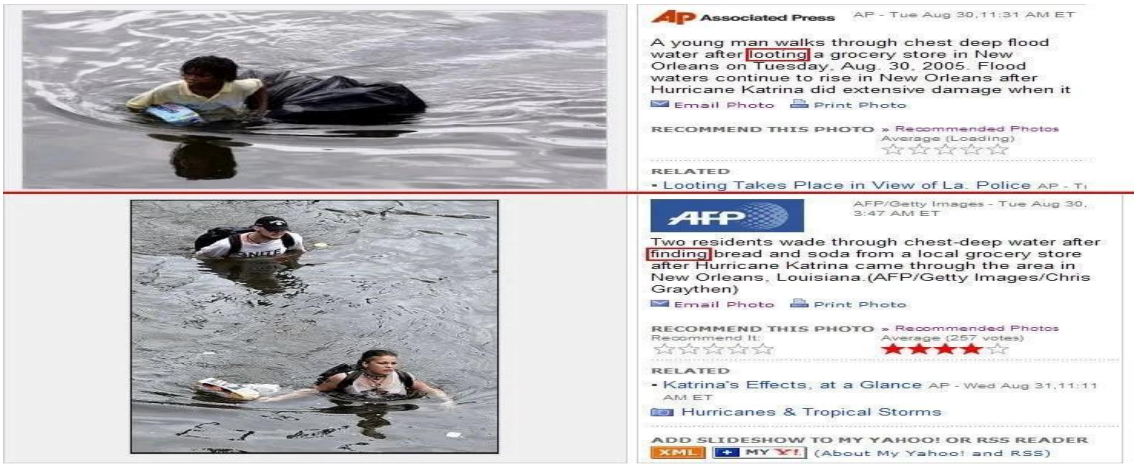

Figure 1: The Memoir Genre Straddles Even the Media Platforms

The quotation and image discussed illustrate how the Memoir genre extends beyond traditional literature to media platforms, exposing the disparity in how white and non-white behaviours are framed. Mann & Pass (2011) point out that it is important to go back to the complex storm aftermath, when the national and international media concentrated on the social trauma left by the disaster, particularly on racial and cultural diversity, in order to chart the evolution of the cultural visualization of Hurricane Katrina (p. 2), an observation that reflects a broader trend where people are increasingly open and transparent about their experiences of illness, grief, and death.
As misinformation and falsehoods proliferate among public figures, newspapers, and social media, readers may be more inclined to seek truth in the books they choose. Almqvist (2020) suggests that "the emergence of the personal memoir as a literary genre may be a positive by-product of the era of public mendacity," indicating that the popularity of memoirs could be driven by a desire for authenticity in contrast to the pervasive dishonesty in public discourse (p. 162).

Although daybooks, diaries, and notebooks also deal with recollection, Hauser (2001) points out that a memoir takes writing to a new level. The act of just documenting occurrences, memories, or even reflection is often insufficient to justify a viewing. The shift from "this is my story" to "this is the story" of human existence, and therefore also your story, is necessary for writers who want to connect with readers (p. 4). Jennifer (2016) agrees, pointing out that although an autobiography is a particular kind of memoir, the concepts are not synonymous (p. 1). Barrington (1997), on the

other hand, argues that a memoir is a tale from a life, whereas an autobiography is the story of a life (p. 22). Autobiographies typically provide a linear account of a person's life, while memoirs focus on specific periods or events, offering insight, wisdom, and discovery that emerge from challenging times.what makes a memoir isn't just what you remember; it's your insights about what you remember.

Layla Saad's *Me and White Supremacy* originated from an Instagram challenge and developed into a workbook with over 100,000 downloads, making it accessible to a broader audience. She reflects:

> The concepts that I have brought together in this book begin from my own personal lived experiences (both as a child and as an adult regardless of where I have physically lived in the world), and they are deepened and further illustrated by drawing on examples from experiences I have witnessed, historical contexts, cultural moments, fictional and non-fictional literature, the media and more. I am just one black Muslim woman contributing to dismantle white supremacy by people of colour who are far more courageous and have risked far more than I have all over the world for centuries. It is a humbling honour to have the privilege to add to this global and collective body of work (p.20).

Saad presents her lived experiences in a format distinct from traditional memoirs by leveraging public platforms like Instagram. Kaipainen (2022) argues that "self-life writing, as understood from Smith & Watson (2010), comes close to Miller's understanding of genre, which centers on the social action the genre accomplishes rather than seeing memoir as a fixed, unitary form. The self-representation in self-life writing texts can take various forms using features from the novel, autobiography, and history as narrators selectively engage their lived experiences and situate their social identities through personal storytelling" (p. 151-167). By alternating between public and private content on Instagram, Layla integrates her personal experiences with professional insights, creating a rhythm of publication that reveals her memoiric expertise and offers glimpses into her daily encounters with white supremacy. This approach fosters an intimate connection with her readers, blending memoiric and professional intimacy to build emotional rapport and social connection.

The memoir’s distinctiveness does not entirely shield it from similarities with other literary genres. Almqvist (2020) explores these similarities, noting that "for the most part, long-term conscious memory retains the more dramatic moments, and in this respect, memory is akin to a storyteller or a playwright. Experiences such as falling in love, having children (or not), being ill, or dying (or in the case of this study, experiencing racial othering for people of colour) are commonplace yet significant. These experiences form the drama of 'ordinary' life, so a memoir may often read like a novel" (p. 160). Like novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and poets, memoirists extract pivotal moments from the expanse of their lives, highlighting key events of high comedy or tragedy.

Memory aids in constructing vivid settings, pinpointing characters, and employing various literary styles—such as rhetorical questions, sarcasm, satire, flashbacks, and humour. It also selectively chooses characters who populate the narrative, including principal characters, anti-heroes, and minor figures remembered for their unique and colourful traits (p. 160). In memoirs, the author often serves as the central protagonist, making the hero conveniently close at hand. The other characters in the memoir, whether they are central figures or minor characters, are remembered due to their distinctive and memorable qualities, adding depth and colour to the narrative.

4.8 Summary

This section has examined memoiric techniques, focusing on various methods of presentation within the memoir genre. It has been shown that memoirs, through their exploration of truth, emotional journey, and journaling practices, authentically capture human experiences. This chapter also highlighted how people of colour are marginalized through white supremacy and white privilege. By intersecting various literary genres, the memoir recounts the lived experiences of the narrator, blending factual accounts with fictional elements. Furthermore, the writer situates themselves within their life story, allowing readers to deeply connect with the experiences presented. Having analysed memoiric techniques, the next chapter will explore thematic concerns related to racial reception by the people of colour.

CHAPTER FIVE

RACIAL RECEPTION BY THE PEOPLE OF COLOUR

5.1. Introduction

This chapter delves into the racial reception by the people of colour as depicted in the memoirs under study. Central to this discussion is the assertion that individuals of colour consistently encounter racial hegemony, which leads to the appropriation of their identities by dominant groups. The Chapter examines racial hegemony, racial stereotypes, white centering, racial terrorism and fictional approaches on theme in the memoir.

Cradle of Power: Racial Hegemony

The concept of hegemony, originally introduced by Marx, was further expanded by Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci, who developed the idea of cultural hegemony. Gramsci argued that the reality created by the elite is disseminated to the masses through cultural institutions such as schools, prisons, political parties, and media (Gramsci, 1971). He emphasized that the power of the ruling class is presented as natural and desirable. Additionally, the process of hegemony is complex, involving all relationships, activities, and experiences within a society (Williams, 1977). Within this framework, cultural stereotypes emerge, acting as catalysts for discrimination and subjugation—a perspective this study explores by examining racial conflicts and the resulting marginalization.

The history of black minorities in America is deeply intertwined with their legacy as slaves, a condition that persisted even after the Civil War (Galtung, 1990; Paik & Walberg, 2007). In a society dominated by racial hegemony, Cullors & Bandele illustrate a reality where people of colour are branded as terrorists by the prevailing white society, resulting in continuous persecution, discrimination, and unjust imprisonment. In *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter* Memoir, white individuals demonstrate their perceived superiority by depicting people of colour as both inferior and threatening. This marginalization, as discussed by Edward Said in orientalism, illustrates how the "other" is mistreated by the "self." Angela Davis supports this claim in the foreword to the memoir, where she argues:

> *When they call you a Terrorist; A Black Lives Matter Memoir* illuminates a life deeply informed by race, class, gender, sexuality, disability and religion, at the same time as it highlights the art, poetry and indeed also the struggles, such a life can produce, but of course, it is not only Patrisse´s brother who is called a terrorist. It is Patrisse herself, and her co-workers and comrades, including Alicia, Opal and the other organizers and activists affiliated with the Black Lives Matter network movement whose commitments and achievements are maligned with the label of terrorism (p.8).

Davis contends that the hegemonic labelling of people of colour as terrorists creates an environment conducive to racial prejudice.Cullors supports this view when she states, "And I knew it because I am the thirteenth-generation progeny of a people who survived the hulls of slave ships, survived the chains, the whips, the months laying in their own shit and piss" (p. 12). This reference to the transatlantic slave trade underscores the historical roots of otherness and prejudice faced by African Americans. In line with this viewpoint, Dias (2004) claims that while white men may have seen these local Black people as animals, equiano also perceived them as hideous creatures and a lesser order of existence. Equiano goes on to say that when he was aboard the slave ship, he was jammed below deck with numerous dead and dying Africans, which reinforced his aristocratic ideas. Equiano's biggest pain stemmed from the pestilential scent in these appalling surroundings (p. 56). Cullors and Bandele bemoan the way that the majority culture views African Americans. The people who witnessed their names, languages, Goddesses and Gods, the arc of their dances, the rhythms of their songs, the grandeur of their aspirations, and their very families taken and stolen were the ones who were legislated as not being human. (p. 12).

This underscores the historical experience of marginalization and bias faced by people of colour, such as Cullors & Bandele. In response to this discussion, Rabaka (2006) argues that white people's souls are flawed in every way, that white people's claim to the universe is erroneous, and that Du Bois questioned white privilege and superiority long before the current debate over critical race theory and critical white studies (p. 454).

Similar to this, Saad defines white supremacy at the outset of her anti-racism campaign. The racist ideology known as "White Supremacy" is predicated on the idea that because white people are better than other races in many aspects, they ought to rule over them (p. 22). In his discussion of white supremacy, Hooks (1992) claims that black people who embrace their blackness, that is, who have broken free from the kind of white supremacist thought that implies we are less than human, insufficient, victimized, etc., frequently discover that society punishes them for daring to challenge the status quo. In the workplace, we run the risk of being perceived as dangerous or unfriendly when we express ourselves from a decolonized standpoint (p. 17). *Me and White Supremacy* thus portrays racial hegemony as centered around opposing rights and equality for people of colour, and in various forms, terrorizing the Other. Saad explains white supremacy as a system "you are born into"—a framework that bestows unearned privileges, protection, and power upon you, specifically designed to obscure the implications of this privilege, protection, and power for those who do not share your appearance (p. 23).

Saad´s viewpoint aligns with Marcus (2009), who posits that white hegemony influences every aspect of American institutions, from education and life expectancy to criminal justice and political representation, often placing African Americans at the disadvantaged end of the spectrum. Brown (2003) emphasizes that while white hegemony is crucial to America's institutions, it is white supremacy or white domination that sustains it without challenge. Saad illustrates how white supremacy is fundamentally supported by elements such as white privilege and white fragility. McIntosh (1989) notes, ´After I became aware of the extent to which men benefit from unacknowledged privilege, I realized much of their oppression was unconscious. I then recalled frequent complaints from women of colour about the oppressive nature of white women they encountered´(p.1).

Saad contends that white privilege refers to the unearned benefits afforded by one's whiteness or the ability to "pass" as white. She stresses that white privilege is not inherent but meaningless without the context of white supremacy (p. 37). Additionally, white fragility is closely tied to white privilege. Diangelo (2011) describes white fragility as "a condition where even a small amount of racial stress becomes unbearable, provoking various defensive reactions" (p. 5). This definition

supports Saad's observations in her 2017 blog post titled *I Need to Talk to Spiritual White Women* About White Supremacy, where she notes, "It unexpectedly went viral to hundreds of thousands of readers worldwide and elicited responses of white fragility ranging from seemingly well-intentioned ('This isn't helpful; you are being divisive when discussing race') to overtly hostile ('[insert anti-black, misogynistic, islamophobic rant here]')."

Saad concludes that the prevalence of white fragility is largely due to two factors: limited exposure to discussions on racism and a lack of understanding about white supremacy itself. This lack of understanding may contribute to the experiences of Cullors's brother, who faces relentless cycles of violence from law enforcement, as described: ´but there is nowhere that they can be or feel safe. Real life may be an obnoxious and harsh visitor, but we attempt to create a universe where we tell them they are important and that we are too (p. 20).

Upon enrolling at Milikan, an all-White middle school in the wealthy and beautiful Sherman Oaks, Cullors befriends a White girl whose brother is a local drug dealer. Surprisingly, he has never been arrested or feared arrest, unlike Cullors's brothers, who are routinely harassed by police simply for being black. According to Ririn (2008), Americans live in a racially aware culture where people of colour—as opposed to White people—are often viewed less favourably and put in inferior roles (p. 67). She adds, "African Americans have always lived in a society where there is a pervasive sense of white dominance, control, and inferiority." It seems that white supremacy and hegemony have periodically impacted and permeated every area of the country (p. 68).

The broader context here underscores the ambivalence of relations between the people of colour and whites, as people of colour live in a state of insecurity, knowing they could be killed at any time. Cullors & Bandele cite the case of Mike Brown, who was shot in the head by a police officer in 2014 as he knelt on the ground with his hands up. This reality is also depicted in *Dear Martin* and *Dear Justyce* through the pervasive nature of racism in American society and the American system, as voiced through the stories of Justyce McAlister, Vernell Laquan Banks, and Emmanuel Rivers. Justyce and Quan write letters reflecting on their experiences as African

American young men and how their lives are shaped by the unfair treatment that black individuals receive in America. Moreover, they challenge the hegemonic white narrative and bring attention to issues that readers might not be aware of (Marta, 2021, p. 16). Thus, *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir* presents a genocidal label for the constructed identities of people of colour. Lingass (2016) references the renowned painter Pablo Picasso, who asserts, "everything you can imagine is real," supporting the notion that the social relevance of a group becomes legally significant when the group is treated as real and gains its own identity (p. 79).

On Day 3, Saad examines the concept of tone policing—a tactic employed by those with privilege to silence those without by focusing on the tone of their speech rather than its content. She explains that tone policing can involve criticizing people of colour for being "too angry" when discussing racism or favouring those who use tones perceived as softer, more eloquent, and soothing. People of colour are expected, according to Saad (p. 46), to conform to the white gaze—the white supremacist prism through which those with white privilege perceive people of colour and the degree to which a person's white fragility feels comfortable while talking about racism. This research claims that knowledge of the white gaze is necessary to comprehend tone policing.

Critical race theorists broadly agree that the prevailing capitalist world system is inherently anti-black and aligns with what Mills (1996) refers to as the "racial contract," which structures societies to benefit white people at the expense of non-white individuals (James, 2020). Mills further explains that "white supremacy is the unnamed political system that has shaped the modern world" (p. 1), suggesting that the white gaze has been a central aspect of white supremacy, while Fanon (2008) places the black experience within the framework of the white gaze by stating that "the black body lives under a crushing objecthood" (p. 109). Examining the objectification of black bodies uncovers the damaging impacts of the white gaze and tone policing, which are manifestations of white supremacy (James, 2020, p. 4). This analysis mirrors Abdul & Khondakar's (2016) description in native son, where "blindness caused by hatred and fear creates a dense wall of racial stereotypes. Bigger sees white people not as individuals but as an undifferentiated 'whiteness'—a

powerful, threatening, and hateful authority that denies him control over his own life and identity" (p. 5). Similarly, Cullors & Bandele depict a concealed identity among the people of colour, leading some to attempt to pass as white: The white teenagers who smoke pot in the restrooms or on the school yard in between courses are not my people. I don't belong with the minority of black females who want to be the next Whitney Houston or Janet Jackson (p. 25).

As a person of colour, Cullors feels betrayed by the black girls who aspire to pass for white, a case of an identity contestation, which explains why Du Bois asserts that the " colour line would be the problem of the twentieth century. Moreover, individuals who are light-skinned or appear white but are non-white have the potential to pass as white. Delgado & Stefancic (2001) describe this as "the attempt to dissociate oneself from one's racial origins and present oneself as white" (p. 69), and as leveraging racial categorization based on physical appearance in the United States (p. 80). This circumstance leaves Cullors feeling alienated from both the white girls and the black girls in her class who are attempting to pass as white. She wants to assert her identity as a black girl and fully embrace the truth and authenticity of that identity.

Davis (1991) discusses passing as white as a social phenomenon rooted in the one-drop rule, which reflects America's distinctive conception of Black identity (p. 14). Moreover, Hobbs (2014) describes racial passing as "a versatile strategy that is closely linked to class status" (p. 30), observing that light-skinned slaves during the Antebellum period used passing as a means to gain freedom, whereas, in later times, it was primarily employed for upward social mobility (p. 29).

5.2 I Can’t Breathe; Racial Stereotypes

Stereotyping involves representing and judging others based on fixed and rigid characteristics attributed to their category (Pickering, 2015). Stereotypes about African Americans have evolved due to both scientific racism and legal challenges. For example, in the 1875 Supreme Court case Dred Scott v. John F. Sandford, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney ruled against recognizing the humanity of people of African descent. It is crucial to understand that stereotypes of African Americans, including figures like the mammy, mandingo, sapphire, uncle tom, and watermelon, have been influenced by their historical and social contexts.

The stereotype of the mammy—characterized as overweight, self-sacrificing, and dependent—emerged alongside the American film industry, appearing in films such as *Birth of a Nation* (1915), *Imitation of Life* (1934), and *Gone with the Wind* (1939). Saad introduces Day 12 of her Instagram challenge with a quote from Mona Hayder:

> We them barbarians
> beautiful and scaring them
> earth shakin´ rattling
> be wild out loud again
> (Mona Hayder)

Saad argues that the ongoing reinforcement of racist stereotypes through media and collective perception enables white supremacy to position non-white individuals as the "other"—people to be feared, mocked, marginalized, criminalized, and dehumanized (p. 95). Consequently, as previously demonstrated, the impact of imposed stereotypes in the African American experience is profound. Lippmann (1965) explained how individuals use mental frameworks to create images of people or events in their minds, referring to these representations as "pictures in our heads" (p. 30). Similarly, Ruppert (1995) shares a similar view, noting that "to stereotype someone is to attribute to that person characteristics seen as shared by most or all members of their group" (p. 82). Adichie (2008) adds that "the problem with stereotypes, especially in literature, is that one story can become the only story about a group or race, and stereotypes constrain our ability to think in nuanced ways" (p. 43). Saad refers to this generalization of racial stereotyping as the collective subconscious, which perpetuates white supremacy by portraying the other as inferior and deserving of marginalization and dehumanization. On stereotyping, Bhaba (1994) explores the concept of fixity in cultural representation. Bhaba says: The use of the term "fixity" in the ideological construction of otherness is a key component of colonial discourse. In colonial discourse, fixity is a sign of cultural, historical, and racial difference that denotes both disorder, degeneracy, and demonization as well as rigidity and an immutable order (p. 94–95).

Bhaba characterizes the stereotype as a fetishistic form of representation that ignores or denies difference. He posits that narcissism and aggressiveness are methods of identification within the dominant colonial power's approach, which employs stereotypes to present an understanding of difference while simultaneously denying and concealing it (p. 95). According to Bhaba, as Saad contends, black individuals are both despised as "brutish" and desired, representing a mixture of derision and desire, or as freud describes it, phobia and fetish (Freud, 1927). Saad offers a critical philosophical analysis on race and prejudice, noting that individuals of any race can hold biases against others. She contends that racism occurs when prejudice is combined with power, allowing the dominant racial group (in a society marked by white supremacy, those possessing white privilege) to exert control and cause harm to other racial groups on personal, systemic, and institutional levels (p. 95-96). She clearly illustrates the distinction between self and other: People of color may thus have prejudice against White people, but they cannot be racist against White people. In contrast to a white person, who would be able to do so if the roles were reversed, they lack the authority (which comes with white advantages) and the support of an oppressive system known as white supremacy, making it impossible for them to convert prejudice into dominance and punishment (p.96).

This study highlights how the other is prejudiced. According to Saad, there is a non-reciprocal dynamic where white individuals can prejudice people of colour, but people of colour cannot prejudice white individuals. She explains that this disparity exists because the self, endowed with power through white privilege, has access to systemic power, whereas people of colour do not possess such a system of power or "black privilege." Sheila (1978) asserts that "blacks have historically been the target of the most severe forms of prejudice, not only from white-pigmented individuals but also from lighter-skinned people and even from other blacks" (p. 3). Sheila further contends that the stereotypical depiction of black individuals in American history and literature as "other" is a direct consequence of their historical experiences in America (Sheila, 1978, p. 3). Furthermore, Seymour (1966) observes that within a democratic society, the negro has often been reduced to a mere stereotype rather than a fully realized person, with escape from such a perception and reception only achievable through imaginative representations.

For example, in three of Hemingway's short stories—"A Canary for One" (1927), "Light of the World" (1933), and "Night Before Battle" (1939)—Black characters are predominantly portrayed as stereotypical figures in the background. In Hemingway's "A Canary for One," a train is seen pulling into a Paris station: The black troops were on the station platform. They were tall, with close-cropped features glowing under the electric light. They were dressed in brown uniforms. They were too tall to look at, and their features were incredibly dark. The black people stood at the station as the train departed Avignon. Alongside them was a stocky white sergeant (p. 29). Hemingway emphasizes the soldiers' height by referring to them as "tall" twice before mentioning the short white sergeant. This juxtaposition might be intended to create a consciously ironic contrast, resembling a reversal of the dominant white "overseer." Cullors & Bandele depict a racially marginalized black family by contrasting the impoverished neighbourhood of Van Nuys with the affluent white neighbourhood of Sherman Oaks:

> It was the 1990s and what was mostly said in carefully chosen language was that being born black or Mexican was enough to label you a gang member, a dangerous drug-involved criminal. and there were few leaders, save for perhaps Maxine waters, saying that it was all bullshit. A group of kids hanging out in the street-because there were no parks and rec, no programming, nothing excerpts sidewalks and alleyways to hang out in became a gang. And it was mostly boys rounded up in those years. Boys, the initial wide swath of collateral damage in the war on gangs, The war on drugs, both of these names code for ´round´ up all The niggers you can´ (p.47).

Cullors & Bandele argue that the concept of otherness in a white-dominated society contributes to the marginalization of people of colour. They conclude by referencing the oppressive nature of the American police force, describing it as a mechanism for constructing an inferior identity for black individuals. This is akin to Conrad's depiction of the other in *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, where wait is described in terms like "black fraud" (Conrad, 1979, p. 25), "bloody black beast" (p. 42), and "black phantom" (p. 93). Conrad's characterization reflects how racial and historical representations shape the narrative, portraying Wait as a symbol of racial and existential darkness. Gerrig & Banaji (1991) suggest that naming or labelling can significantly influence identity formation. Furthermore, Benfield (2009) argues that the "N-word" sustains notions of white supremacy and black inferiority, influencing popular culture and the legal system (p. 4).

A detailed examination of *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter* Memoir reveals deep-seated marginalization within the American criminal justice system. Cullors's brother, Monte, is imprisoned for attempted burglary. Although Monte explains to his mother over the phone that "They told me to do it" (p. 51), he faces a six-year sentence. Cullors critiques the prison environment, highlighting the dangers faced by marginalized individuals, Monte serves out his time in the mental health ward of the jail to which he is transported. Upon his arrives, a Mexican gang member stabs him very immediately. After growing up surrounded by Mexicans and attempting to fit in behind the wall, my black brother discovers that prison has other rules. Black people can only remain with other black people. Whites with Whites, Mexicans with Mexicans. (page 51).

This illustrates the stereotypical tendencies prevalent in American prisons, applying the concept of the colour line even behind bars. Monte, perceived as a criminal, occupies the lowest status due to his skin colour. Cullors observes that the prison system's treatment of black individuals reflects the racist ideologies underpinning American society. Monte's placement in the mental health unit, perceived as mentally unfit, further underscores the systemic racism inherent in the American criminal justice system. Kolehmainen (2021) quotes Fanon (1952), who, writing in the context of the french antilles, asserts that: "I am aware that similar behaviour patterns exist across all races subjected to colonization" (p. 15).

Fanon lists negative connotations associated with the colour black, such as blackness being equated with moral and physical dirtiness (p. 146). Friedrickson (1971) notes that "the image of the Negro as a dual-natured being—docile when enslaved and ferocious when free—originated from the pro-slavery imagination" (p. 276). In his 2019 address Rise Up Africans, Trump perpetuates these stereotypes by saying, "Let us all accept the fact that the black man is a symbol of poverty, mental inferiority, laziness, and emotional incompetence." They are only good at creating noise, dancing, getting married often, drinking, practicing witchcraft, having sex, acting hypocritically in church, arguing, and whining. Monte's imprisonment at age sixteen, alongside Cullors's father, reveals the harsh realities of the prison system. Cullors describes Monte's growing erratic behaviour and how the police, upon learning of his background, dismiss his emergency: "Monté is growing increasingly erratic. When he

speaks, he babbles, and nothing we say seems to reach him" (p. 54). When Cullors calls an ambulance, she observes that "they will not come to help when they hear Monte's background (a Black background) ..., he is a felon; you have to call the police'" (p. 54).

This viewpoint shows how black male vulnerability is constructed and perpetuated through stereotypes and systemic racism. Monte, Patrisse's brother, and other incarcerated individuals are products of a society that dehumanizes and marginalizes people of colour, reducing them to the status of the "abhorrent other´´. The Black Lives Matter Movement, as depicted in *Me and White Supremacy*, reveals how racial contestation manifests through racial stereotypes. Saad identifies various stereotypes associated with different racial groups and genders, such as "poor, lazy, less educated, less intelligent, exotic, sexist, spiritual, oppressed, terrorist, drug dealers, domineering, effeminate, aggressive, demure, alcoholics, overachieving, helpless, and opportunists" (p. 98). She questions why these stereotypes persist and reinforce the notion that those without white privilege are inherently inferior and a threat to white civilization (p. 98). Leonardo (2009) contends that "whiteness and white privilege function as systems of oppression and domination, where whites are the subjects and people of colour are the objects" (p. 69).

Saad argues that while racist stereotypes may seem absurd when articulated, they persist internally as subtle and dangerous. She notes subconsciously, it makes sense to you when you see these beliefs mirrored back to you via media messaging, such as when you think that Native Americans are primitive, Arabs are terrorists, or latinx people are drug dealers. You can thus understand, at least partially, why they are treated the way they are by the legal, medical, educational, and immigration systems, as well as by the job sectors. By exposing your racist preconceptions, you will be able to recognize how you actively support white supremacist ideology by accepting its false claims that people who don't look like you are inferior. (page 99).

Supporting Saad's viewpoint, Ledford (2012) contends that ´the presence of white supremacy and its psychological impacts on racism frequently go unnoticed, are disregarded, or receive insufficient attention´ (p. 3). Although connecting with one's racial or cultural heritage can be a positive path for forming identity (Tatum, 2003),

the personal perceptions linked to this identity influence self-image, the interpretation of one's surroundings, behaviours, and ultimately, one's lifestyle (Ledford, 2012, p. 13). Therefore, Saad emphasizes how white supremacist ideology promotes a colour-blind approach to racism among white individuals.

5.3 The Caged Bird; White Centering

An analysis of *Me and White Supremacy* and *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir*, makes it evident that white centering plays a significant role in perpetuating racial prejudice. The concept of "white centering" became widely recognized in anti-racist discussions during the summer of 2020, a period marked by a national racial reckoning in the wake of the tragic deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at the hands of police in Minneapolis and Louisville, respectively. Although the term gained significant attention in 2020, its use actually predates this period, having been used to describe the common practice of prioritizing white perspectives and concerns over those of people of colour.

Scholars have long explored societal frameworks that illustrate this tendency. For example, Crenshaw (1989) observes that "discrimination against a white female is... the standard sex discrimination claim, and claims that differ from this standard tend to appear as some form of hybrid claim" (p. 27). Crenshaw's statement underscores how societal norms often use whiteness as the default lens for interpreting sex discrimination and womanhood, thereby pushing black women into a marginalized, nearly invisible, role.

Saad tackles this topic in *Me and White Supremacy* by paraphrasing Toni Morrison at the start of Day 16: Reviews have already charged me with not writing about White people, as if our lives would be meaningless and shallow without the White gaze (p.116). ... I have dedicated my whole literary career to ensuring that no work I have ever written had the white gaze as the dominant one (Morrison, as stated in Saad, p. 116).

Morrison’s statement reflects her resistance to allowing the white gaze to dominate her narratives, a form of white centering that often obscures black experiences and perpetuates colourism and white supremacy. Similar to this, Francis (2000) claims

that, in contrast to depictions of white people and whiteness as a general symbol, black people and blackness as a general symbol have historically had a marginal or disadvantaged position in American literature. But Morrison's work, as Francis points out, effectively flips this depiction, putting white people in the other person's shoes. This lets Morrison concentrate on her black protagonists while making white readers deal with the fallout of being seen as the other (p. iii). Saad further elaborates on this by referencing an interview from the 1990s between television journalist Charlie Rose and Toni Morrison. In the interview, Morrison expresses frustration with being repeatedly asked by journalists, "When are you going to write books that are not about race?" Saad contends that this question subtly implies that Morrison's focus on black individuals, rather than framing Blackness through a white-centric perspective, somehow undermines the significance, relevance, and mainstream appeal of her work (Saad, p. 116).

Francis (2000) suggests that Morrison's characters often engage in a critical analysis of whiteness and by presenting white individuals as the marginalized group, Morrison not only disrupts conventional literary and societal roles but also promotes a critical scrutiny of whiteness (p. 11). However, Hooks (1990) notes that the capacity to critically evaluate whiteness is a skill many black people employ when addressing cultural or literary matters, despite the racist presumption that oppressed individuals are incapable of understanding or critiquing the mechanisms of power (p. 41).

The preceding viewpoint illustrates that when the roles of the "excluded" and the "included" are reversed, as seen in Morrison's works, white characters are positioned as subjugated, lacking comprehension, and incapable of understanding the dynamics of power (p. 11). Saad elaborates that during her podcast, which primarily featured black women and women of colour, she often encountered inquiries from those with white privilege, such as, "Is this podcast for us?" She expresses surprise that when content predominantly features white individuals, it is considered universal, but when it centres people of colour, it is deemed irrelevant to white audiences (p. 117). This reaction underscores the significance of race (Orelus, 2011; Watson, 2013), especially in racially stratified societies (West, 1994).

Race matters not because of any essentialized, eugenically manufactured, or genetically predetermined destiny that aims to define social, mental, and physical capacities according to skin colour and phenotypic characteristics. Rather, race is significant due to historical contexts and lived experiences that have elevated racial identity to the top of socially constructed racial hierarchies, in which the white race is invariably positioned at the top (Applebaum, 2009; Yancy & Davidson, 2014). Saad describes white centering as the elevation of white people, values, norms, and feelings above all else. She reiterates that this concept aligns with the definition of white supremacy, which dismisses other narratives as less significant—a notion Morrison deliberately subverts when she states, "I have spent my entire writing life trying to make sure that the white gaze was not the dominant one in any of my books" (p. 35).
Racial prejudice marginalizes people of colour, rendering them vulnerable to white centering and white supremacy. Cullors & Bandele recount petition was created, disseminated, and delivered to the White House. It declared us to be terrorists. We who said "black lives matter" in reaction to the death of the 17-year-old kid who was shot while carrying iced tea and Skittles. During the first week of demonstrations over the consecutive police shootings of Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge and Philando Castle in Minneapolis, the document acquired popularity. That week came to an end on July 7 in Dallas, Texas, when a sniper opened fire at a Black Lives Matter demonstration attended by mothers, fathers, and children who were there to declare, "We have the right to live" (p. 13).

This excerpt illustrates entrenched institutional prejudice, with the "petition circulated" relegating people of colour to the margins of racial discourse. Surprisingly, when people of colour voice their grievances, they are labelled as terrorists.Cullors reflects that, like many involved in the Black Lives Matter Movement, she has lived between the twin terrors of poverty and police brutality. She points out that the neighbourhoods in which I grew up and fell in love, as well as the neighbourhoods in which many Black Lives Matter activists have done the same, were declared war zones with us as the enemy (p. 14).

According to Ferguson Police Chief Tom Jackson, there was no connection between Michael Brown, then eighteen, and police officer Darren Wilson's first interaction in the case of Brown's death and a convenience store robbery, as the Huffington Post reported (Lavender & Cadet, 2014). Though reports varied, the overarching story linked Brown to robbery. Cullors bemoans the fact that, as a person of colour, she or any other person of colour must constantly live with the fear that she or any member of her family may be slain without consequence. Media reports highlighted Brown's physical size, portraying him as a "giant" who "towered over a petrified convenience-store employee" Officer Darren Wilson, in a November 2014 interview, described Brown as looking like "a demon" and compared holding him to feeling like "a five-year-old holding onto Hulk Hogan" (Sanburn, 2014). Noble (2022) comments that the portrayal of black individuals as "ugly" draws from minstrelsy, using exaggerated facial features to caricature them as inhuman and buffoonish, making them objects of ridicule (p. 10). Kirton (2010) expands on this, citing Halstead's (1984) identification of various forms of racism, including "pre-reflective gut," which is based on intense hatred of those from different races or cultures, leading to dominance and aggression (p. 56). Lessing (1966) presents pre-reflective gut racism in her portrayal of Mary Turner's extreme hatred towards black characters, a sentiment instilled by other white racist members of society. When the old settlers say, "one has to understand the country," they mean, "you have to get used to our idea about the native" (Lessing, p. 20).

Similar to the labelling of people of colour as terrorists, Kirton's analysis underscores the contemptuous perception of black individuals. Further illustrating cultural racism, Lessing (1978) portrays black characters as oppressed because they are from a foreign culture and are only valued for their labour on white-owned land. The black people on the farm were as far away as the trees and rocks; they were faceless individuals who only existed to serve, say "yes, boss," take their money, and leave (Lessing, p. 267). According to Cullors & Bandele, labelling people of colour as terrorists enforces a form of mental conformity, described in this study as prejudicial normativity. This explains why, when Cullors's brother and their friends were accosted by police in Van Nuys, made to pull up their shirts, and roughly searched, they did not protest or speak out against the mistreatment. They won't swear or weep. When they reach adolescence, neither my brother nor I will have anticipated that things may turn out

differently, so they won't argue that they don't deserve this kind of care (p. 19). This allusion to systemic, institutionalized racism aligns with Foucault (1988). on power relations between the self and the other., Foucault asserts Power relations do not in and of themselves constitute forms of repression; rather, in most societies, organizations are established to maintain a state of symmetry and freeze power relations so that a particular number of people benefit socially, economically, politically, and institutionally. This is what is meant by an institutionalized, frozen, and immobilized power relation, which benefits some at the expense of others. (p.410).

Thus, for people of colour, dehumanization, subjugation, and mistreatment have become so normalized that they are often seen as the status quo. Monte is shot with rubber bullets, tased, and transferred to twin towers, a high-security prison where he is classified as a threat to officers. According to Cullors, Monte is booted, stripped, malnourished, and humiliated by the corps, who also get to refer to him as the menace. They might refer to him as the damage. They accuse him of being a terrorist (p. 90), which is a prime example of systemic oppression. In addition to limiting equitable access to housing, work, and education, institutional racism has had a significant negative influence on the criminal justice system. According to Elias & Feagin (2016), institutionalized racism is the ultimate manifestation of the institution's structure and is comparable to structural and systemic racism (p. 7).

Furthermore, an analysis of recent autobiographical graphic novels reveals entrenched racism in American society. Luigi (2018) broadens this perspective by analysing systemic racism in graphic novels by Lewis et al. (2014), which depict the power of social institutions within the government system that restricts the rights of African Americans. Through narratives and images, the novel portrays how the segregation system was enforced, particularly against the African American character John Lewis and others. Segregation was prevalent in public spaces such as restaurants, movie theatres, and government offices. During the 1960s, segregation also incited violence by creating a clear divide between African Americans and white people. Discrimination persisted as white individuals were not arrested for their violent acts against African Americans, including John Lewis (p. 226).

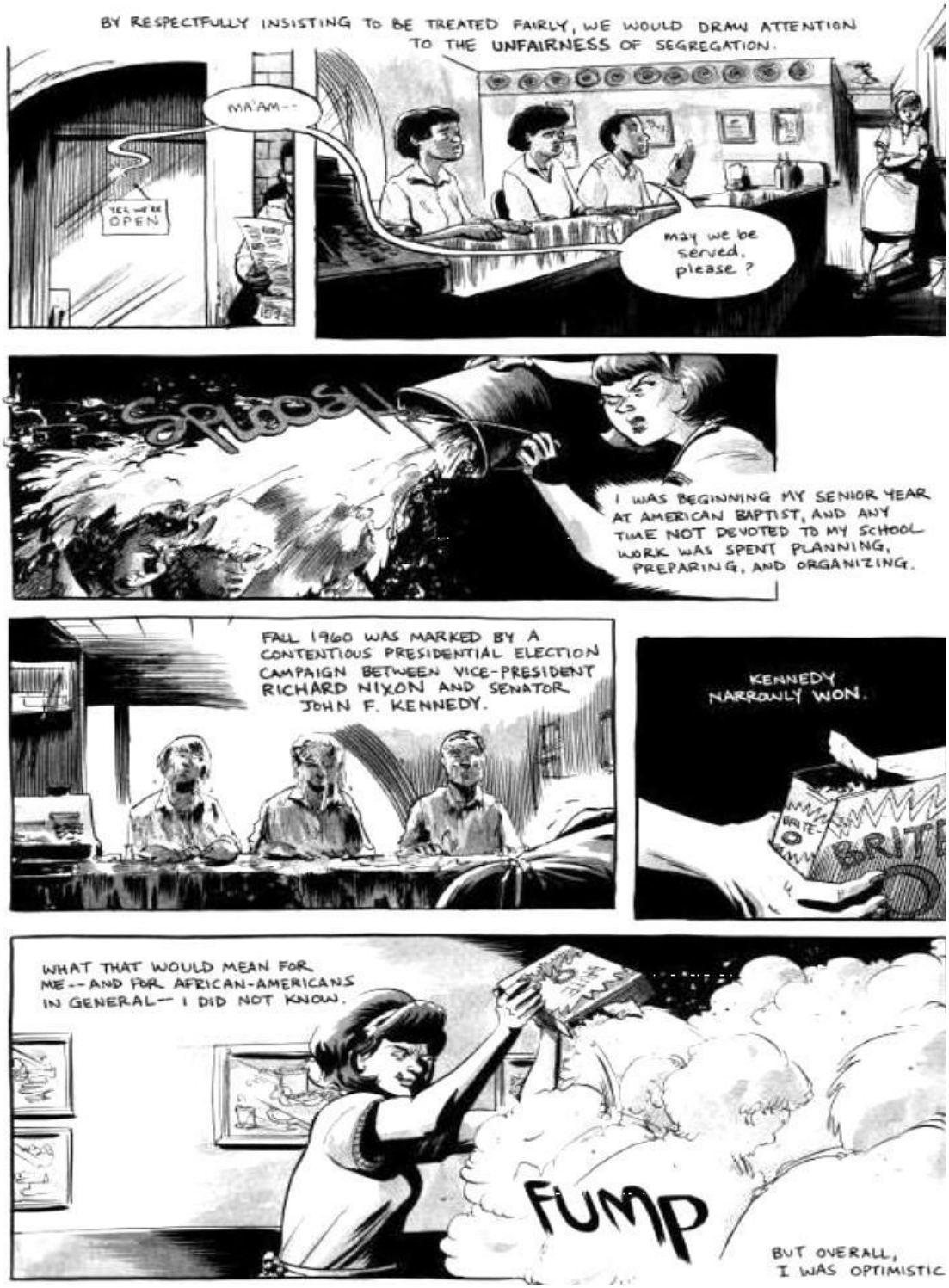

Figure 2: Discrimination against John Lewis and other African Americans in a fast-food restaurant in Nashville on November 10, 1960 (Lewis,Aydin,& Powell 2017,10).

The graphic images above depict African Americans entering a white establishment, engaging in peaceful sit-ins to challenge segregation. These sit-ins had already successfully ended segregation at the downtown lunch counters. A similar non-violent approach was taken in Nashville, where the narrator stated, "by respectfully insisting to be treated fairly, we would draw attention to the UNFAIRNESS of segregation" (panel 1). The word "unfairness" is emphasized in all capital letters, highlighting the African American community's intent to dismantle the unjust segregation system through non-violent means, aiming for fair treatment. These words appear at the top of panel 2 to illustrate the reaction of white individuals towards African Americans. The African American characters display tragic facial expressions, their faces covered in white flour, symbolizing the harsh responses allowed by white society despite John Lewis and his fellow activists initiating a non-violent campaign. Moreover, the depiction of the white woman on the page underscores her dominance, as her face is prominently shown in panels 2, 3, 4, and 5, contrasting with the African American characters, who are only visible in panels 2, 3, and 4 while receiving mistreatment from the white woman. This portrayal clearly signifies white superiority and the corresponding inferiority of African Americans (p.227-228).

According to Indah & Titien (2020), African Americans still have to contend with systemic injustice even if the system of near-slavery was abolished a long time ago (p.19), while Feagin (2006) elaborates that racial oppression includes dimensions such as the white racial frame, racist ideology, alienated social relations, ongoing struggle and resistance, related racial domination, unjust treatment by whites, and racial hierarchy reflecting divergent group interests. Saad observes that "the idea of white centering manifests in multifaceted dimensions like White Apathy, Cultural Appropriation, and Tokenism." She defines White Apathy as "arising as a self-preservation response to protect oneself from facing complicity in the oppression that is white supremacy. Although White Apathy lacks aggression, it is deadly in its passivity, which entails remaining silent, unbothered, or uninterested in intervening when people of colour are subjected to racial marginality" (p.111).

In marrow of Tradition, one of the main white supremacists who incites violence in the book, Major Carteret, explains to Mr. Delamere the caste he thought black people belonged to. Giles (2020) adds, "You are mistaken, sir, in imagining me hostile to the negro...on the contrary, I am friendly to his best interests." I employ him, I pay taxes to support his education, and I fund courts and prisons to keep him in line. All I'm saying is that I don't want to live under the rule of a lesser race (p. 19). Tony et al. (2022) investigates the methodology by which Forman & Lewis (2006) assessed racial indifference using data from the 2005 Chicago Area Study (CAS), which included participants 21 years of age and above. They used responses to the statement: "First, it's not really my problem if racial minority groups experience unfair treatment and need help." The response options were 1 (strongly agree), 2 (somewhat agree), 3 (somewhat disagree), and 4 (strongly disagree). In this dataset, racial apathy was positively associated with opposition to interracial marriage, negative feelings towards blacks and latinos, symbolic racism, perceived threats, and negative stereotypes about these groups, such as being unintelligent, preferring welfare, being difficult to interact with, and neglecting their children.

Saad, in her discussion of Cultural Appropriation, identifies it as a central aspect of white centering. Balanda (2020) explains that "cultural appropriation" in academic contexts refers to the act of dominant groups taking elements from marginalized cultures without respecting their cultural significance. In her chapter "Black Culture Without Black People," Imani (2020) describes appropriation as "colonialism on the scale of the dancing body or sacred ritual object, reducing its vitality to mere consumption or costume, ‘citing blackface minstrelsy as an early public acknowledgment of black culture that reinforced racial and social hierarchies in America´ (p.2). Balanda further explains that despite the systemic oppression of African Americans, white people often view African American culture as "cool" and attempt to replicate it, with figures like Rachel Dolezal, whose story became widely known in 2015, epitomizing racial appropriation.

In Spokane, Washington, Dolezal presided over the NAACP branch before being revealed to be a white lady impersonating a black woman. Dolezal said that she "self-identified" as Black despite her fabrications. Race is entrenched in lineage, in contrast to gender, which may be altered depending on personal identity (Verve Team, 2019).

In identifying as "transracial," Dolezal and similar individuals' disdain those from oppressed groups who are unable to choose to be white or enjoy its benefits. Cultural appropriation was brought to light by Dolezal's case and the media's reaction, with many people denouncing her for taking on a persona that was not her own (p. 11).

Saad expands on this concept by emphasizing the persistent power dynamics in cultural appropriation. Those with white privilege hold institutional and psychological superiority, while those without it experience institutional and psychological inferiority. Racism involves more than prejudice; it encompasses practices, institutions, and structures that allow a dominant group to impose a racial order they perceive as natural or divinely ordained. Young & Brunk (2009) identify two main harms of cultural appropriation: infringement of legal property rights, as seen in accusations against Khloe Kardashian and Kylie Jenner for allegedly copying designs by black creators, and the potential to undermine or attack the viability and identity of cultures or their members´ (p.5). Their study however does not address cultural appropriation in the Black Lives Matter Movement, leaving a gap in understanding its manifestations in contemporary memoirs.

Saad also questions the obscured danger of cultural appropriation in today's globalized world, noting It might be difficult to discuss cultural appropriation in the contemporary, international society. For starters, we have more cultural ties than ever before because to developments in travel, technology, and the widespread use of the internet. This raises the problems of who owns something and how it is now structured (p. 101).

Saad warns that unravelling cultural appropriation is complex due to racial hypocrisy, as some white appropriators mimic black culture to appear anti-racist. Domas (2021) argues that cultural appropriation involves essentializing cultures and adopting elements from cultures to which the appropriator does not belong. Domas bemoans the fact that historically marginalized cultures are the ones that are most frequently appropriated. She cites Said (1978), who contends that in order to appropriate a culture, one must first comprehend its customs and values and that to do so is to dominate and have authority over it (p.2).

Said further elaborates on how the visualization of cultures granted artists an inherent privilege over these cultures and the authority to represent them. He claims that later in the nineteenth century, the Oriental genre tableau took on a life of its own and transformed depiction into visual expression in the paintings of Delacroix and many other French and British artists (p. 3). Through visualization, the act of "othering" was included into art, which functions as a global language devoid of linguistic limitations. Domas (2021) clarifies that understanding a culture and being prepared to acknowledge its worth are the primary components of cultural appropriation (p. 8). Similar to this, Scafidi (2020) highlights the first stage in appreciating a culture by stating, Outsiders must first accept the existence, source community, and worth of a cultural product before they can usurp it (p. 4). This observation reinforces Said's argument that it is the "outsider" who performs cultural appropriation.

Expanding on this conversation, Saad notes that "the appropriation of another culture's objects, motifs, symbols, rituals, artifacts, and other cultural elements" might be a kind of cultural appropriation (p.102). Since cultural appropriation, in its most basic definition, refers to the act of adopting or assuming a certain element for individual purposes—whether it be a distinctive hairdo, traditional clothes, religious components, etc.—this research characterizes such actions as racial theft. In order to use these components in a new context, they must be taken out of their original context. This deprives them of their genuine historical importance and gives them new meaning that was not intended. (p 22). Ijeoma (2018), cited by Saad, defines cultural appropriation as the exploitation or adaptation of another culture by a dominant one. This indicates that cultural appropriation typically occurs between a dominant and a non-dominant or marginalized culture, an issue often mentioned but under-theorized in critical rhetorical and media studies (Rogers, 2006). To further, Said says that the "other" or the Orient will be the topic of study (p.7). It will typically be passive, non-participating, endowed with historical subjectivity, and most importantly, inert, non-autonomous, and non-sovereign with respect to itself. Even if the representation may be founded on fabrications, the appropriator may control and appeal to a wider audience by suppressing the "other." Saad further argues that what distinguishes one culture as dominant and another as non-dominant is the historical and current relationship between the two. She notes that this is a very significant moment in history. It is a popular belief among many white liberal progressives that

we live in a post-racial period. However, the reality is that racism and anti-Black sentiment persist in modern times. The repercussions of past and present colonialism continue to plague people of color on a daily basis (p. 16).

Saad, born to East African and Middle Eastern Black parents and a Muslim in England, narrates how, in both subtle and overt ways, they were constantly reminded of their ‘otherness’—belonging to a non-dominant, inferior culture. In support of this, Mabonga (2021) asserts that the basic tenet of Gramsci's hegemony is the domination of one social class (the dominant) over another (the dominated) with the permission of the former (Im, 1991; Hermann, 2017, p. 37). Finally, Saad talks on how racial hegemony is maintained via tokenism. She cites Octavia Butler, who says that, to those who see things that way, it seems like white people are the norm. According to them, the introduction of a black character should only serve to draw attention to some kind of anomaly, generally one that has to do with narrating a tale about racism or at the very least race (Octavia Butler).

Butler’s statement reflects white centering by asserting that whiteness is the norm while relegating non-white individuals to the abnormal, thereby reinforcing the peripheral margins of racial hegemony. Kanter (1976) defined tokenism as a "artificial appearance" produced by elevating a small number of members of minority groups to prominent positions within the dominant group on the basis of characteristics (gender, race, religion, age, etc.) that are perceived as negative or unlike those of the dominant group. In order to give the perception of racial or sexual equality in the workforce, Saad defines tokenism as the act of making a symbolic or token endeavour to promote unity, especially by employing a small number of members of underrepresented populations (p. 122).

This viewpoint suggests that, in the context of white supremacy, people of colour are often used as props or meaningless symbols to give the impression that anti-racism is being practiced, while the status quo of white dominance remains intact. According to Laws (1975), “Tokens are assigned a marginal status, which indicates an individual's inability to become a full member of a group, even though they are allowed to participate; they remain a ‘stranger’ or ‘opposing’” (p.6). Cook (1978) defines tokenism as referring to a group of people who are numerically in the minority within

the group they belong to, while Zimmer (1988) discusses gender tokenism, defining a token as the status of a female employee hired solely because she is a woman, presented as evidence of anti-discrimination even if her qualifications are insufficient in a male-dominated profession. Similarly, Saad elaborates on how tokenism manifests as brand tokenism.

Brand tokenism, as defined by Saad, occurs “when predominantly white organizations or events engage a few token people of colour or use elements of people of colour 's culture to give the visual effect of diversity without being genuinely committed to inclusion or anti-racism in practice or policy” (p.123). Saad observes that storytelling tokenism is prevalent in films, television, and literature, as highlighted by Octavia Butler in the opening quote. Characters who are racially diverse are frequently presented with underdeveloped roles and storylines that lack depth or nuance. During the Civil Rights Movement, tokenism emerged as a way for the government and institutions to give an appearance of inclusivity without genuinely addressing the movement's demands for redistributing wealth, resources, and institutional power to people of colour. Megan (2022) extends this idea by noting that "Tokenism persists as a white effort to demonstrate diversity within businesses or educational institutions, and people of colour are placed in roles where they become racial tokens in media and education, reinforcing white supremacy ideals and perpetuating the false notion of a post-racial society" (p. 675).

This concept is evident across various forms of literature and media. For instance, although the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolished slavery, it included the clause “except as a punishment for a crime.” In the 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation*, Black men were depicted as villains and criminalized by white actors in blackface, portraying them as threats to the Southern plantation lifestyle. This film significantly influenced the portrayal of people of colour, casting them as villains in the eyes of white audiences. Saad describes emotional labour tokenism as a situation where white individuals or predominantly white organizations impose the responsibility of addressing racism solely on token people of colour, reducing them to their racial identity (p. 124). Lensmire (2017) refers to this as black minstrelsy, where white people exploit stereotypes they create, allowing them to benefit from a deeply unjust and unequal world.

Stereotypical portrayals of people of colour are also common in literature and television. Characters of colour are often used as tokens, reflecting stereotypes based on white perceptions of how people of colour should behave. For example, in The Big Bang Theory, the Indian American character Rajesh is portrayed with an accent and remarkable intelligence but is socially awkward. Such depictions reinforce the notion that people of colour are relegated to supporting roles and rarely receive fully developed storylines. When they do have storylines, they often adhere to American stereotypes about how these characters should be represented.

5.4 Somebody Blew up America; On Racial Terrorism

An analysis of *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir* exposes the severe racial bias, oppression, and disparity in treatment experienced by the people of colour in America. This analysis highlights the deeply ingrained racial dichotomies that define the relationship between the people of colour and white individuals, framed by the self-other binary (Ashcroft et al., 2004; Azam, 2014). In the memoir, Cullors brother, Monte, develops a deep-seated aversion to medicine after his release from prison, as the American penal system had subjected him to excessive medication without his or his family's knowledge. Years and many hospital stays will pass before he (Monte) tells me that the drug is robbing him of his own humanity, according to Cullors' account. It only makes him drowsy and goes to sleep. He is unable to contemplate it, produce something, or really exist in the world (p. 71).

This study underscores the American criminal justice system's excessive focus on incarceration, which disproportionately impacts people of colour. Monte's inability to think clearly suggests that he has endured both physical and psychological torment. Just as Cullors brings up the subject of her brother's imprisonment, Susan (1988) expounds on this matter, saying, one of the most horrible facts of the twentieth century is the ubiquitous prevalence of state-approved torture. Susan goes on to say that she believes that authors, especially those from South American nations, have tough concerns to answer about the prevalence of torture in the contemporary world (p. 13). Susan also quotes Coetzee (1986), who admits that he and many other South African writers have been darkly fascinated by torture. Nonetheless, Coetzee contends that authors who portray the "dark chamber" have two moral conundrums to resolve: first, they have to strike a balance between disregarding and illustrating the state's

indecencies (p. 13). This study suggests that Coetzee may be opposed to the realistic portrayal of torture in fiction, memoirs, or novels, as he likely believes that such depictions could validate the acts of torture, aiding the state in terrorizing and paralysing people by showcasing its oppressive methods in detail.

However, Coetzee concludes that these crimes should not be hidden, stating that the real difficulty is to conceive torture and death on one's own terms, to create one's own power, and to not play by the rules set by the state (p. 13). Continuing the discussion of racial violence, Claudia (2020) claims: Americans incorporate dead people into their regular comings and goings in our nation. Dead Black people are a common sight in this place. dying within ship hulls, being thrown into the Atlantic, hanging from trees, being shot and beaten in churches, being killed down by police, or being held captive in jails. Historically, there has never been a day without seeing, hearing about, or putting oneself up against a black body that is either enslaved, chained, or dead (Claudia, 77).

This quotation on the suffering and discrimination faced by black people aligns with Eva (2022), who references Coates (2015), arguing that "Ta-Nehisi Coates' work has been described as a 'searing indictment of America's legacy of violence, institutional and otherwise, against blacks'" (Nance, 2015). The Memoir serves as a detailed account of the various types of violence experienced by black individuals, ranging from blatant physical attacks, traffic encounters, arrests, assaults, severe injuries, and killings, to more insidious forms of racism such as public shaming, legal exclusion, and discriminatory practices like redlining (p. 50). Additionally, Eva outlines Wacquant's (2009) analysis of four primary violent mechanisms of control that have played a significant role in the oppression and regulation of African Americans throughout American history:

First, "chattel slavery," which Wacquant defines as the basis of the plantation economy and, more importantly, as the first framework of ethnoracial segregation, is identified as the mechanism (p. 196). The second mechanism of control that Wacquant talks about is Jim Crow, which is defined as a system of legally enforced segregation and discrimination (p. 196). This system eventually gave rise to ghettos, which is the third mechanism of control. The last and fourth mechanism he discusses

is the new institutional complex made up of the ruins of the collapsing dark ghetto and the booming criminal justice system, which are connected by a structural symbiotic connection and functional surrogacy (p. 196). In line with these scholars, this study argues that a Black person like Monte, who has been incarcerated for a long period, is "removed from the world," as he has been mentally terrorized by law enforcement agents. Cullors & Bandele argue that "but what is at the ready for us" (blacks) and "on every corner, is access to underground drug markets and all the violence that comes when brothers on the street, or presidents of nations, are defending their territory" (p. 7). Similarly, Cullors's father, Gabriel Brignac, after serving his jail term, had no territory to defend, as she observes, "only trauma and depression to manage" (p. 73). Writing about Du Bois and his magisterial work, Elias (2009) declared that therefore, the class of Black people that the city's prejudices have clearly encouraged is that of the shiftless, the criminal, and the lazy; for them, the city is full of organizations and charities, Philadelphians are thinking and planning, and there is succour and sympathy; but for the intelligent and hardworking young man of color who wants work and not platitudes, wages and not alms, just rewards and not sermons, Philadelphia seems to have no use for such a man (p. 243).

According to the quotation above, America at the dawn of the twentieth century was deeply concerned with addressing the problem of crime, particularly what was referred to as "negro crime," which this study identifies as racial terrorism, a phenomenon that persists during the Black Lives Matter era. Labelled as racially inferior, people of colour, like Cullors's father, have their identities disenfranchised. She notes that her father, lacking both support and the means to express the damage inflicted upon him, is immersed in a life of drug dealing and regular drug use. Thus, the marginalized "other" is pushed to the periphery by an oppressive, white-structured society. In a chat about politics, Cullors recalls a buddy saying that it was simple to comprehend when race was a clear element. Jim Crow left no doubt or uncertainty. Now that race isn't mentioned in the legislation, she advises looking for the codes. She suggests to look for the hidden language everywhere. The laws were rewritten, but white supremacy remained unaltered. She claims, "They didn't destroy that sh*t" (p. 74).

Like Cullors & Bandele, Saad explores the devastating effects of racial terror, particularly the antiblackness experienced by black women. She addresses the various forms in which racial terror is perpetuated, with a specific focus on the gendered dimensions of this oppression. She notes that the construction of gendered identities has consistently been a recurring theme in African American literature, with women suffering double oppression. Morrison, for example, illustrates the gender discrimination between male and female slaves, highlighting "the brutal form of double oppression suffered by black women on account of their race and gender" (Chakravarty, 2008, p. 178). This dual suffering is central to *Beloved*, where female slaves are doubly marginalized, "not only does their skin colour push them towards the margin, but also their gender causes their being doubly marginalized" (Shahrazaee & Ladani, 2014, p. 19).

Saad starts Day 9 by referencing Britney Cooper, who notes that Black women understand the meaning of self-love in a society that despises them. This view is echoed by Feminista (2019), who highlights that "black girls are magic," a concept that has evolved into a peaceful movement celebrating the beauty, power, and influence of Black women and girls. Public figures like Michelle Obama and Misty Copeland have supported Thompson's hashtag #Blackgirlmagic, which has gained recognition on prominent platforms such as BET and Essence Magazine. Despite Thompson's intention to highlight the positive aspects of Black girlhood, some critics argue that the term dehumanizes Black girls by implying a lack of humanity and focusing excessively on superhuman strength (Chavers, 2016). Saad also reflects on Viola Davis's 2018 speech, where she discusses her experiences as a Black woman in Hollywood:

> When I started my production company with my husband, we started It because I got fired of always celebrating movies that didn't have me in it.I don´t mean me Viola, I mean me as a black woman...I was tired of seeing the expansive imagination of writers when they wrote the mess, the joy, the beauty, the femininity of white characters and maybe an hour into the movie, you saw the obligatory black character just kind of walking into the camera, who had a name-didn´t really have to have a name because you know nothing about them. And even when you know something about them, it's always romanticized. we have to be maternal. We have to be the saviour. We have to make that white character feels better (p.19).

From this quotation, Layla expands on the terror of stereotyping and the lack of representation of women of colour in various industries and community spaces. The media often denigrates and mocks the experiences of black women. The portrayal of black women in music, ads, comedies, and films seems to be committed to dehumanizing and vilifying them. Black women are often overly stereotyped in the media, playing characters like the welfare mother who is impoverished and unmarried or the boisterous mother who has lost her sexuality (Tindall, 2012). Moreover, the portrayal of Black women frequently considers their experience either as women or as Black people, but rarely as both, ignoring their status as a dual minority (Thomas et al., 2011). According to Crenshaw (1991), "black women in America are confronted with unique complexities in their lives as they navigate the crossroads of race and gender, the meeting place for their intersecting social identities" (p. 1243). According to Collins (2004), all women are part of a gendered power system in which males hold dominant positions due to a normative set of prescribed feminine behaviors that are supported by cultural practices and ideas. Saad quotes Malcolm X on the Black woman, stating, "Black women are the most disrespected, unprotected, and neglected people in America" (p. 80).

She discusses how black women are either super humanized or dehumanized, a perspective supported by Adam et al. (2014). They contend that the general process of dehumanization entails considering an individual or a group to be devoid of human characteristics (Haslam & Loughnan, 2014, p. 401). Superhumanization, on the other hand, is a process that is different from dehumanization in that it deprives people of their human features. Superhumanization has not received much attention in research, and when it has, it is often operationalized only in terms of the preference attribution of capabilities that are exclusive to humans (Demoulin & Van Pachterbeke, 2008; Haslam, Kashima, Loughnan, & Suitner, 2008).

Building on these ideas, McDole (2017) critiques the mammy stereotype, stating that it subjugates Black women, positioning them as inferior to other binary groups, including Black men, white women, and white men. He further argues that while the mammy stereotype originally emerged from a white supremacist imagination to mask socioeconomic inequalities, Black men have, over time, embraced this stereotype for different purposes (p. 8). Saad adds that all these instances represent a form of white

gaze, a perspective shaped by a distorted and violent North American history. She also notes that Black women worldwide face this white gaze, often being perceived as angry, strong, aggressive, and wild, while being seen as less intelligent and beautiful compared to other women (p. 80).

Hooks (1984) provides an insightful analysis of the implications of black men participating in the subjugation of black women, reinforcing their inferior position. Collins (2000) laments that black women are often seen as the "mules of the world.", while Hooks counters this view by arguing that since black women have been stereotyped by both white and black communities as "bad" women, they have struggled to ally with men from either group to seek protection from the other (Hooks, 1984, p. 108). This study questions whether complexion influences the level of discrimination a black woman faces. In 1995, West noted that stereotypes about race and gender were similar, with stereotypes about Black people and women being childlike and emotional (Ehrenreich & English, 1978). Saad suggests that darker-skinned black women are more harshly perceived. West supports Saad's claim.

Where these stereotypes converge, as with black women, distinctive pictures are produced (Landrine, 1985; Smith & Stewart, 1983). West draws the conclusion that black women have historically, culturally, and medially been characterized primarily through three stereotypes: as seductive, sexually irresponsible, promiscuous jezebels; as threatening and argumentative sapphires; and as highly maternal, family-oriented, and self-sacrificing mammies (Collins, 1990; Sims-Wood, 1988; Weitz & Gordon, 1993).

5.5 Fictional Approaches on Memoir and Theme

5.5.1. Imagery and Descriptive Language

Imagery and descriptive language serve as powerful tools to vividly illustrate scenes in the reader's mind, appealing to the senses and crafting rich sensory experiences. They enhance narratives by employing detail and adjectives, evoking emotions, and adding depth to characters, settings, and events within the story (Ortiz, 2023). In his reflection on the influence of time on narratives, Anderson (2012) asserts that "we make stories of ourselves, but history rewrites us; time makes stories of us all."

Moreover, even if we don't always like to see ourselves this way, we are our own creations (p. 21).

Additionally, genres often intersect and blend with one another; they are hybrid, dynamic, and malleable (p. 25). In memoir, there is a Western tendency to incorporate novelistic techniques, which can sometimes lead to unintended consequences, such as compromising or even negating a narrative's nonfiction status (p. 26). Cheever (2001) acknowledges the use of fictional techniques in memoir but emphasizes the importance of adhering to the reader-writer contract, which involves an implicit or explicit promise regarding what will follow (p. 29). While the content of a memoir should remain real and truthful, authors are at liberty to tell their stories in any way they choose (Flook, 1997). Cullors shares: My mother Cherice raises my younger sister Jasmine, my elder brothers Paul and Monte, and myself on a block that serves as the major thoroughfare in my mostly Mexican neighbourhood in Van Nuys, California. Our building is a two-story, tan-coloured structure with 10 sections and apartments. The paint is flaking, the gate doesn't shut correctly, and the intercom system is broken (15).

In this passage, Cullors "transports" the reader into her memories with both clarity and emotion. She vividly portrays the setting of a predominantly people of colour neighbourhood, highlighting the class distinctions between people of colour and white communities in America. Such detailed descriptions of people, places, and events allow for the recreation of the past, bringing forth the sensations and sentiments experienced. This enables memoirists to construct a sensory, tangible world, deepening the reader's connection to the personal narrative and making the memoir more intimate and immersive (Ortiz, 2023, p. 5), since understanding a story requires readers to form a mental representation, or situation model, of the narrative (Kintsch, 1988). Mental imagery in memoir involves the ability to create vivid mental pictures, enhancing the quality of these mental models (De Koning & Van der Schoot, 2013).

From this quotation, one can envision where Cullors and her family lived, revealing the challenges faced by people of colour. Furthermore, narrative texts—such as memoirs—are important because they simulate the social world of humans and let readers feel the feelings and ideas stirred by the events of the tale (Mar & Oatley,

2008). Saad uses personification to create powerful images of white supremacy, stating, "If you are willing to dare look white supremacy right in the eye and see yourself reflected back, you are going to become better equipped to dismantle it within yourself and within your communities" (p. 23). Saad figuratively challenges readers to confront white supremacy directly, acknowledging that addressing this issue is no easy task. Yeibo (2012) argues that "figurative language serves both functional and artistic purposes" (pp. 180-187). However, when used appropriately, figurative language can enhance the aesthetic value of a text and increase the reader's interest in visualizing the meaning of these figures of speech and interpreting the conveyed message (Padillah et al., 2016). Saad, therefore, urges readers to confront their internalized white supremacy and begin dismantling it from within and in their communities.

5.5.2 Flashbacks

Flashback involves revisiting past events within a narrative, offering context or backstory that enhances the reader's engagement and connection to the story. It serves as a tool for filling in gaps with necessary information. Suzanne (2022) describes it as "going back to an earlier time in a story or play for the sake of clarifying certain details concerning the present time" (p. 320). In a flashback, Cullors reflects on the poverty her family endured, as detailed in the following excerpt:

> My own Mother worked 16 hours a day, at two and sometimes three jobs. She never had a career, only laboured to pull together enough to make ends meet. telemarketer, receptionist, domestic support, office cleaner-these were the jobs my mom did and all were vital to us especially after the Van Nuys GM plant shut down and our family´s stability did for, right along with it.Alton got a series of low-wage jobs that had no insurance, no job security and no way to take care of us, his family, which is why I think, looking back now, he left and while he visited and was always there, it was never the same again in the 1980´s, with all this was going down, unemployment among, black people, nearly triple that of white people was worse in multiple regions of the united states, including where I lived, than it was during the great recession of 2008-2009 (p.17).

Through this flashback, Cullors compares the unemployment rate of black people to that of white people, highlighting a disparity that has persisted over time. By emphasizing life without a father and a mother who worked multiple low-paying jobs amidst rising unemployment for black communities, Cullors underscores the

challenges faced by people of colour. This builds her character as resilient and active, eventually leading her to co-found the Bback Lives Matter Movement. Kenneth & Robert (2010) argue that "from 1972 to 2004, the average unemployment rate was 12.4% for Black males versus 5.4% for whites. The ratio of these two rates, 2.3%, aligns with the observation that unemployment among Blacks typically doubles that of whites" (p. 1). Gebeyehu (2019) notes that "various triggers can cause a flashback, including songs, food, people, places, or similar events to those in the past, enabling reflection on life experiences, both positive and negative, and applying them to the present" (p. 1).

Cuddon (2013) argues in favour of these viewpoints, stating that flashbacks serve to enlighten readers about people and events, disclose and develop themes within a book, and serve as a reminder of former occurrences. Mafela (1997) agrees, pointing out that writers often use flashback to provide backstory on people and events. According to Baldick (1990), a flashback occurs when the narrator of a literary or non-literary work interrupts the chronological order of events and inserts former experiences while confronting current ones, connecting the two sets of events (p. 1). According to Gebeyehu, a flashback provides the reader with more details about a character's history, such as secrets, conflicts inside or outside of them, or important occasions that had a lasting impact on their life (Gebeyehu, 2019, p. 1).

When a memoirist uses flashbacks well, the reader is able to comprehend current events better and is given insight into the motivations behind the acts of the characters throughout the narrative. This improves the reader's emotional response to the story and aids the author in developing a theme (Mohammed, 2016). In a flashback, Cullors recounts how the Jehovah's Witness church negatively impacted her. She laments, "The only reason that we are poor is that my mother got pregnant young, which violated Jehovah's Witness rules, sex outside of marriage and all that. They shunned her, and for years she worked tirelessly to be accepted back into the Kingdom Hall, back into the love she sought. She sort of made it, eventually, over years, but never in enough time to climb back into middle-class safety" (p. 34).

This provides readers with background information about the character and insights into her motivations, deepening the inner conflict. Cullors later distances herself from attending the Jehovah's Witness church, stating, "In that hour and in that place, being a Jehovah's Witness became something that existed as part of my past. And beyond the doors of the Kingdom Hall, I set out to find God, to find my spirit, to find myself" (p. 60).

Parallel to this, Saad recalls her early encounters with white privilege, writing, "Even though some of my elementary school teachers were aware that they weren't supposed to treat me any differently than the other students in my class, they frequently did—not because they were intentionally racist or malicious, but rather because of their own indoctrination as white supremacists" (p. 38). Flashback as a literary device stimulates conflict, deepens emotional resonance, and allows readers to empathize even with the antagonist, as seen in Saad's experience with white supremacist teachers.Moreover,a well-executed flashback can heighten tension, making readers curious about the underlying causes of events—such as the inherent white supremacy in Saad's teachers—and how these themes manifest throughout the narrative.

5.5.3 Rhetorical Questions

Rhetorical questions, structurally similar to ordinary questions, are typically not intended to elicit an answer (Yankah, 1994). They have existed as long as language itself, with instances frequently found in political speeches (Orwell, 1986). Cullors recounts the story of her incarcerated brother Monte, who faces terrorism charges and is held as a high-alert prisoner, confined to a cell 23 hours a day in solitary confinement. When Monte's medication for his schizoaffective disease is rejected, she expresses her extreme irritation and asks, "What sort of society uses medicine as a weapon? keeps it away from those in need of healing while continuing to create the medications that are used as execution weapons in American prisons? (p 91). Rhetorical questions, both semantically and functionally, serve as a statement or claim, as the writer either knows the answer, the answer is already known, or no one, including the writer, knows the answer, implying that finding an answer is the reader's or listener's desire (Obioye, 2009). Consequently, the reader of the Memoir comes to understand that denying incarcerated Black people in America access to medicine is a tool for perpetuating white supremacy.

Obioye further emphasizes that "rhetorical questions can be used to evoke emotions, express strong feelings of outrage, vehement indignation, and jolt readers and listeners out of complacency" (p. 3). For example, during Monte's court session, Cullors notes, "I am angry, so angry, and I find I have to summon all the strength within me to try not to explode" (p. 94). She continues with rhetorical questions when the public defender fails to effectively handle Monte's case. Cullors's mother cries uncontrollably, choking out the words, "I feel so guilty." The narrative continues:

> I am confused, why would my mother or our mother feel guilty? What did she ever do except love us and work for us, two, three jobs at a time and worship and follow rules, while her own family turned its back on her? and then slowly I begin to consider, is this what it is to be a mother who has to carry the weight of having to protect her children in a world that is conspiring to kill me? Are you forced to exist within a terrible trinary of emotion, rage, grief or guilt? What of the joy and the peace that loving a child brings? What of pride and of hope? Could it really be true that my mother has been given no door number four or five or six or even seven to walk through in order to know the wholeness of Motherhood? Is she one in a long line of black mothers Limited to survival mode or grief? (p.95).

Cullor passionately argues why her Black mother, who has a child incarcerated and battling a schizophrenic disorder, should be treated like people from other races. The readers are drawn to Cullors's perception of the white, as she outlines the injustices that cause her mother to feel guilt for being a Black mother in America. The above series of questions, asked in quick succession, are classified as "Type B" by Obioye (2009), who asserts that this type "expresses strong emphasis: weighty ideas and emotions, a sense of bewilderment, and strong feelings of outrage" (p. 5). As readers, we gain insight into the outrage that fuels Cullors's repeated rhetorical questions, with these questions directly appealing to the reader to understand the prejudices faced by Black individuals in America. The use of rhetorical questions in a memoir elevates the text, giving it a polished, specialized, and sophisticated quality that is the hallmark of a skilled Memoir Narrator.

5.6 Summary

This chapter's primary focus was on exploring the racial perception by the people of colour. The analysis revealed that those holding power through white supremacy exert hegemony that subjugates people of colour. The examination of white centering and racial stereotypes demonstrated how these forces reduce people of colour to labels such as "terrorists." Both *Me and White Supremacy* and *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir* illustrate the construction of colour identities, which emerge as a recurring motif in African American memoirs. These identities are shown to perpetuate double oppression for people of colour. Finally, the study uncovered that the American criminal justice system has systematically targeted Black males, essentially "terrorizing" them due to the existence of racial binaries that dichotomize the construction of self and other.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of Findings

The aim of this study was to explore racial contestations during the Black Lives Matter Movement, as depicted in the memoirs *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir* by Patrisse Khan-Cullors & Asha Bandele and *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F. Saad. The study employed postcolonial theory as the theoretical lens to analyse these racial contestations within the memoirs.

The first objective focused on analysing the memoiric techniques used in the selected texts. It was revealed that the memoir, through its distinct narrative techniques, effectively conveys racial contestations during the Black Lives Matter Movement, possibly diverging from the portrayal of race in more traditional genres like novels, poetry, novellas, or short stories. The memoir was found to be indispensable for its truth-telling approach, as it involves real individuals recounting their life stories, experiences, or encounters. Cullors & Bandele powerfully present the struggles and challenges faced by people of colour, illustrating their commitment to advocating for victims of social injustices, police brutality, mass incarceration, and confronting overt acts of racism that society and authorities often overlook.

The study found that memoirs, by highlighting the emotional journey of the memoirist, effectively package these journeys based on the subject matter being addressed. In this study, the narrators address racial contestations during the Black Lives Matter Movement. The emotionally charged voices of lamentation harshly criticize a system plagued by white supremacy, one that discriminates against the "other" while privileging the "self." As a result, these binaries are used as an excuse to perpetuate racial hegemony in the form of white supremacy and white centering. This suggests that the emotionally infused nature of the memoir allows it to transcend various literary disciplines while recounting the narrator’s experiences.

The use of the first-person narrative voice, where a character in the story recounts events and experiences from their own perspective using pronouns like "I," "me," and "my," was identified as a technique that enables readers to engage directly with the narrator's thoughts, emotions, and experiences, thereby fostering a deeper understanding between the reader and the narrator. In this way, the identity of people of colour is portrayed as one that is subjugated, marked by racial trauma, and consciously marginalized. Cullors & Bandele encourage readers to "put themselves in the narrator's account" to empathize with the historical struggles against racism in a white-dominated society. Similarly, in *Me and White Supremacy*, Layla advocates for the necessity of engaging in anti-racism efforts, emphasizing that it is painful to witness how people of colour are treated as inferior globally.

The study also highlighted journaling as a technique used by memoirists to capture daily activities while seeking to convey the truth, as the memoir is a collage of past experiences. Through journaling, readers or writers revive memories—whether negative or positive—and assess whether these memorable acts and experiences persist in their own time and in what ways. The study established that racial contestation between white people and people of colour continue into the Black Lives Matter Movement. Additionally, putting emotions on paper can be a way to uncover repressed feelings. By engaging in journaling, the memoirist, representing people of colour, expresses the feelings of hatred they have experienced due to white supremacy. This study affirmed the memoir's uniqueness compared to other literary genres due to its ability to understand the experiences of "the other" while focusing on real events rather than fictionalized accounts.

The second objective investigated the racial reception by the people of colour. It was discovered that the seat of power lies with the hegemon, while the "other" is subjugated. In alignment with Said's concept of orientalism, *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir* highlights racial marginalization, revealing a life deeply influenced by race, class, and gender. The study revealed that the marginalization of people of colour has persisted due to white supremacy, which enables white privilege. Monte, Patrisse's brother, has had numerous encounters with law enforcement officers since childhood and is incarcerated despite suffering from a

schizophrenic disorder, with his denial of medication used as a weapon for racial prejudice.

The study also found that dismantling white supremacy would automatically dismantle white privilege, but the promotion of white supremacy only intensifies and perpetuates white privilege, thereby further disadvantaging people of colour. Additionally, the study showed that racial stereotyping, ingrained in the collective subconscious and perpetuated by the media, continues to fuel racism during the Black Lives Matter Movement. However, the same platforms, such as the media—which Saad uses for podcasts on Instagram—can be utilized to challenge and dismantle white supremacy. Surprisingly, the study revealed that racial stereotypes and prejudice can be held by individuals regardless of race, as racism involves the combination of prejudice with power, where the dominant racial group exercises control over other racial groups. Lastly, the study found that racial terrorism is rampant among Black individuals, reinforcing the study's focus on "racial contestations." Monte is a victim of "real world violence" simply because he is black.

However, the study demonstrated that the memoir relates to other fictional genres, as it employs universal literary techniques such as imagery, rhetorical questions, and flashbacks. While the content of a memoir is based on real events, authors retain the freedom to tell their story in their own way.

6.2. Conclusion

Based on the study's objectives and subsequent analysis, several conclusions can be drawn. First, it is clear that racial contestations have persisted through various periods in American history, driven by the presence of white supremacy. The struggle between binaries—such as black versus white, self-versus other, colonized versus colonizer, rich versus poor, and west versus east—has been exacerbated by racial divisions stemming from white privilege. The memoir genre, as an authentic account of the writer's experiences, plays a crucial role in dismantling racial hegemony. Unlike fictional texts, which may treat such issues as elements of fantasy, memoirs reveal them as real-life actions. White centering, white privilege, white supremacy, and white stereotypes emerge as the primary causes of racial contestations. The Black Lives Matter Movement, however, can be characterized as a period marked by

heightened activism, revolutionary agitation, and advanced technology, where instances of racial marginalization are immediately highlighted and white supremacists are called out for perpetuating racial prejudice.

Overall, the ongoing racial contest between white and black individuals is evident, though it is a struggle that lacks balance, as the dominant group holds power and employs both colonial and subtle methods to sustain prejudice. Systemic institutions, such as mass incarceration and an unjust criminal justice system, are also utilized to suppress people of colour. Finally, the book provides a thorough description of the numerous types of violence that people of color experience, such as beatings, traffic stops, physical attacks, and murders, in contrast to fictional genres.

6.3 Recommendations for Further Studies

This study identified several areas that could benefit from further research, particularly in relation to memoirs and racial contestation:

i. Although this study found out that the memoirs authored by people of colour present marginalization due to existence of systemic white supremacy, a recommendation is made for a further study, to find out how a memoir on racial issues authored by a white person would depict the debate on racial contest.
ii. Having established that the use of first-person narrative voice is a technique that enables readers to engage directly with the narrator´s experiences, a recommendation is made for a future study to find out on the possibility of racial bias in the narrative voice.
iii. Among the many media platforms that present racial contestations, a recommendation is made for a study on the intersectionality of memoir and social media.

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APPENDECIES

Appendix I : Ethics Review Approval

CHUKA UNIVERSITY

Knowledge is Wealth *(Sapientia divitia est)* Akili ni Mali

CHUKA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Telephones: 020-2310512/18 **P. O. Box 109-60400, Chuka**
Direct Line: 0772894438 **Email: info@chuka.ac.ke,** **Website: www.chuka.ac.ke**

13th August, 2024

REF: CUIERC/ NACOSTI/603
TO: **James Gitonga**

RE: Racial Contestations in the Black Lives Matter Period: The Memoir Approach
This is to inform you that *Chuka University IERC* has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is *NACOSTI/NBC/AC-0812.* The approval period is 13th August, 2024 – 13th August, 2025.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used
ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by *Chuka University IERC.*
iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours of notification
iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours
v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to *Chuka University IERC.*

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) https://oris.nacosti.go.ke and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Benjamin Kanga
SECRETARY

Appendix II : Chuka University Ethics Approval

CHUKA UNIVERSITY

Knowledge is Wealth *(Sapientia divitia est)* Akili ni Mali

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

Telephones: 020-2310512/18
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P. O. Box 109-60400, Chuka
Website: www.chuka.ac.ke

REF: AM10/57649/22 **15th August, 2024**

Director
National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation
Off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete
P O Box 30623, 00100
Nairobi.

Dear Sir / Madam,

JAMES GITONGA

The above-named person is a *bona fide* student of Chuka University pursuing MA in Literature proposal titled**: Racial Contestations in the Black Lives Matter Period: The Memoir Approach.**

Mr. Gitonga has defended at the Faculty level and is now expected to conduct research. Any assistance accorded will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

15 AUG 2024

Prof. Moses Muraya, Ph.D.

DIRECTOR
BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

Appendix III : Nacosti Permit

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **762932**

Date of Issue: **21/August/2024**

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Mr.. JAMES GITONGA of Chuka University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Tharaka-Nithi on the topic: RACIAL CONTESTATIONS IN THE BLACK LIVES MATTER PERIOD: THE MEMOIR APPROACH for the period ending : 21/August/2025.

License No: **NACOSTI/P/24/39340**

762932

Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

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