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# *The Depiction of African American Women in Hollywood Movies*

*Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture*

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## DEDICATION

*This work is nicely dedicated to my dear father, who sacrificed all his  
life for our sake,*

*Who has given me what nobody else would ever have.*

*This work is dedicated to my dear mother, for her endless love , trust  
and strength she provided me with.*

*This work is also dedicated to my sister's soul Rabab and my dear sister  
Ratiba and all my family numbers and aunt Hakima.*

*This work is also dedicated to my best friends Asma, Nihed, and  
Kaouther.*

## DEDICATION

*This research work is dedicated to my entire family for their support, both morally and financially during this course.*

*This research work is dedicated also to my best friends for their encouragement.*

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We take this appportunity to express gratitude to all of the members of the jury for accepting to read this work and check mistakes in it which we could not pay attention to them.

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## ABSTRACT

This study highlights The depiction of African American Women in Hollywood Films. It aims to explore how black females are showcased in Hollywood films after the end of the civil rights movement in 1968 . The study took a place during the academic year2018-2019 in this study we attempts to use conceptual content analysis within the black feminist thoughts .it was used in order to understand the content and better explain the messages contained in the three movies : *hidden figures 2016, for or Colored Girls 2010,and the color purple1989*.also data was collected from online journals, books, e-books, websites and motion pictures in order to support this study .The findings of this study showed that African American women are always represented in negative way in Hollywood .

**Keywords :** Hollywood, depiction, stereotype, black feminist thoughts, civil rights movement, blaxploitation.

## ملخص

تسلط هذه الدراسة الضوء على صورة المرأة الأمريكية ذات الأصول الأفريقية في أفلام هوليوود. الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تحليل و فهم انعكاس حركة الحقوق المدنية على صورة المرأة في الأفلام.. المنهجية المتبعة في هذه الدراسة هي تحليل المحتوى المفاهيمي حيث انه تم تطبيقها على ثلاثة أفلام . أظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة إن النساء الأمريكيات من الأصول الإفريقية يتم تمثيلهن دائما بصورة نمطية سلبية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية :** هوليوود، التصوير النمطي، الحركة النسوية السوداء، حركة الحقوق المدنية

## **List of acronyms and abbreviations**

MGM: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Inc.

RKO: Radio-Keith-Orpheum.

ABW: The Anger Black Women

CRM: Civil Rights Movement

CORE: The Congress Of Racial Equality.

DGA: Directors Guild Of America

EEOC: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

EEO: Equal Employment Opportunity .

NAACP: National Association For The Advancement Of Colored People.

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## General introduction

Who does not know Hollywood? Who is not familiar with this area in Los Angeles, California, which is referred to as the United States Cinema? Over the past decades, Hollywood has been the oldest film industry in the world . Hollywood affects society and vice versa. Over the years, Hollywood has shaped our views on various topics, consciously or unconsciously. At the same time, it is affected by the surrounding political, economic and social circumstances.

Since the emergence of the black women in Hollywood films has been interest of many researchers and social analysts. According to Melissa Harris-Perry, “women have always had to wrestle with derogatory assumptions about their character and identity” (Harris-Perry 4). Women have been continuously discriminated against in terms of their position on the social, political and economic spectrum of society and although this lack of recognition is due to a very complex web of issues and socio-political factors, it is safe to state that television plays a huge part in this distorted image of African American women ( 13). Thornton, D. in 2011 claim that American television will only be able to contribute to a racially equal society, when it stops reproducing these racial stereotypes. When producers are able to cast actors from all different ethnic backgrounds without having to think about it. As long as whiteness remains the prevailing point of reference regarding race (Thornton) .

Hollywood movies has certainly made progress since what was probably the most racist film of all time *The Birth of a Nation* (1919) but there still remain issues that represent that racial discrimination in Hollywood movies is not completed yet obliterated. African American actors are mostly depicted in a rather stereotypical manner. That is to say, if these actors are given the chance to appear on screen in the first place, for most blacks are just not cast at all. African American women seem to be hit twice as hard by this injustice, since they are part of two minorities at the same time.

The period between 1954 and 1968 considered as an important period in American history because it had a deep influence on American politics, economy, and art. This period is related to the Civil Rights Movement which aimed to secure the legal rights of African Americans. With its roots in the era of reconstruction in the late 19th century, this movement had deep impact on the ideology and structure of American society, it also led to the largest legislative effects.

The image of the African American women in Hollywood films had changed over history now the representation of black females in Hollywood films is more realistic, and it reflects the real African American women by contrast years ago. The image was totally different in which they were stereotypically portrayed ,sexually showcased ,and negatively illustrated .

The salient existence of black females in Hollywood films, which makes it an obligation to have study in about it .This study will provide knowledge about the way that African American women were illustrated. It also will enable people to read between lines and unveiling the symbols, sings and the hiding messages in films ,not just watching for the seek of entertainment and Enjoyment. Also this study will spot the light on how African were viewed in American society changed over years within changes of public politics.

This study also shed light on deep impact of the Civil Right movement on how the African American women are portrayed in Hollywood films in which it would be useful for students in the field of media in general. Few researches have been done studies on the depiction of African American women in Hollywood films, but this is the first work in which it studies the influence of that movement on the image of the black females in Hollywood. It will be useful for historical studies.

The main aim of the study is focusing and critically analysing African-American females representations in Hollywood, and discuss the influence of the civil rights movements on it . And also to decode and reveal the hiding messages, symbols and signs that African American

females have been represented with. Moreover, it explores the way how black females are illustrated in Hollywood films, And in order to find out the main change in the image of black females in Hollywood films.

The controversy that lies within this subject requires a deep investigation to determine As the real image of the black females .Thus, through the course of this study, we aim at finding valuable answers to the following basic research questions:

- 1- How Black women are depicted in Hollywood films?
- 2- How often the black females are demonstrated within the mammy, jezebel, and sapphire stereotypes in Hollywood?
- 3 - Did the image of the African American women change after the civil rights movement?

This study explore a representation of the African American women in Hollywood films by applying conceptual content analysis within black feminist thoughts .for this research we code The concept of stereotypes include the mammy ,sapphire ,and jezebel . Ole Holsti, American political and academic, offers a broad definition of content analysis as, "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages," (Holsti 125) .

This dissertation divided in two major parts. First one, theoretical part, which consists of two chapter. In this chapter one attempts to give a brief historical background about the development of Hollywood and also, it highlights how minorities, including: Arabs, Muslims, Asian, and Blacks are portrayed in Hollywood films. Furthermore, it spot the light on the evolution of black character and the emergence of black Hollywood. Chapter two dives in the development of the African American women in Hollywood ,and in this chapter will spot light to the civil rights movement, and it influence of Hollywood films .also this chapter will highlights on the black feminism as movements and as theory .

Chapter three is considered with the analysis of three films .in which they are form different genre and different time

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## **Chapter One: The Development of Black Character in Hollywood**

### **Introduction**

This chapter focus on the development of black character in American films over history. First, it shed the light on brief history of Hollywood also, it highlights how minorities, including: Arabs, Muslims, Asian, and Blacks are emerged in Hollywood films. Furthermore, it spot the light on the evolution of black character.

### **1.1. Hollywood As An Institution**

Hollywood has influenced the film industry around the world since the early years of twentieth century, but Hollywood we see today has gone through several stages before reaching maturity. Researchers divided the development of Hollywood into three stages: classic Hollywood, Hollywood in transition, and new Hollywood.

#### **1.1.1 Classic Hollywood (1927–1948)**

The real beginning of the film industry dates back to 1895 , when it started in Europe first and then moved to the United States, but they were not like the movies we used to watch since the beginning of 1910, when there was no sounds at all, and most of the films were documentary, news, and recordings of some plays. Until the period after 1910 to 1926, which was characterized by a lot of experimentation in the process of editing films, there were uses of special sound effects. This stage was not completely silent, while there was no dialogue at all until the next stage.

The play recordings disappeared to be replaced by drama fiction, and this is also the beginning of the stage of poetic films of a historical nature, this stage included Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, who had a role in solving the issue of the quality of films that began to raise controversy in this period, when they realised that audiences wanted movies that told attractive stories through sympathetic characters.



By the end of 1927, and with the emergence of sound, many sound films have been produced, and their industry has been improved from all sides. The first feature-length talking picture and the first sound film was produced *The Jazz Singer* by Warner Bros. Studio, making it more competitive with other studios.

MGM also proved itself and became the most successful studio in Hollywood in the late 1930s when its head of production Irving Thalberg followed a system in managing his productions that helped the studio to produce profitable films and became in the highest levels. In addition to Paramount, Fox, RKO the big five studios of Hollywood's Golden Age which were also able to improve their image and achieve a great success.

In the late 1930s, classic Hollywood took a form with the height of the studio system, which called on most American directors and actors who had worked independently to deal with this system. By the years 1939, 1940, and 1941 the fortunes of those studios were on the upswing, especially MGM studios, while the classic craft reached its pinnacle when several genres of movies were brought to the screen, such as: the musical, the social criticism, the screwball comedy, the romantic epic, the western. World War II caused all kinds of changes in the film industry, and with the participation of the United States in the war, the government used Hollywood as a tool to discredit its enemies and glorify the values and cultures of America and her allies. Of course, Hollywood started producing combat and patriotic movies which made the growth in movie attendance phenomenal.

### **1.1.2. Hollywood in Transition (1949–1974)**

At the end of the 1940s and during the 1950s, small and independent film companies have emerged, and with the advent of television, which caused a decline in production and weakened the traditional studio system, it required from filmmaking to cooperate with television production, in order to bring back its audiences by using widescreen formats, but failed to do so.

In the early 1960s, Hollywood was almost submerged financially and productively, and much has been said about Hollywood's declining popularity. During this period, the emergence of foreign feature films that were more highbrow and mature have become very popular especially among the youth, competing Hollywood films for the Oscar.

Hollywood has not been able to overcome this crisis until the late 1960's and punctually in 1967, that was a turning point for Hollywood, when *Bonnie and Clyde* showed in the cinema. The film was a combination of humor, violence, horror and realism, causing a shock in Hollywood. The big movie studios did not see that the film was only revolutionary, but it was also commercially successful and critically.

A few years later, a series of films of the same genre such as *Easy Rider* (1969), *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), appeared to achieve unexpected success, and the majority of audiences were late adolescents and young adults, making film studios racing to satisfy these tastes and get them back again. Hollywood finally found its way back. However, it has not been able to regain its former control of the movie market.

The emergence of this wave in the late 1960's did not only created a new kind of film, but also a whole new generation of directors such as: George Lucas, Brian De Palma, Steven Spielberg, Francis Coppola, and Martin Scorsese. These young directors were the base of "New Hollywood" and during the 1970's they have presented many films.

### **1.1.3. New Hollywood (1975–2019)**

During the 1970's big-budget movies with high-concept were brought to the screen. Among them *Jaws* (1975), *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975), *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Star Wars* (1977) which were alternative visions brought to the screen. In 1975, *Jaws* was New Hollywood's starting point. Many films of this kind which were high-concept movies have been produced and have been overwhelmed this period, because of the profits they were earning. The percentage of black and white films decreased, and Hollywood knew how to produce lucrative films.

During the 1980s, technology developed and Hollywood entered a new world of production with the advent of videotape and the appearance of cable and satellite television, which changed the business entirely. People became watching movies at home instead of movie theatres, with the continuity of the cultural idea of going to theatres. This development will be of great benefit to Hollywood in the future.

During the 1990s, New Hollywood entered the first wave of digital technologies which influenced the motion picture postproduction. Hollywood postproduction converted to computer applications, while many directors created their own motion picture production companies. All this helped movies to achieve big earnings than they did during the 1980s and early 1990s.

By the early twenty-first century, modern technologies has become a major goal in the American film industry, even if it is at the expense of film content or their artistic vision. Hollywood has produced and developed the industry of this kind of film throughout its history, taking advantage of the fact that these films have been making profits.

In general, Hollywood, with all its ideas, technologies and innovations, remains the first undisputed film industry of the world. This is despite the fact that all the film industries in the world tried their best to go through with it, but excellence was an ally for American.

## **1.2.Miniorities In Hollywood**

Hollywood minorities such as Arabs, Muslims, Asians, and Blacks have been depicted as second-class citizens continuously over the years, and this problem was one of Hollywood's best known things. Since its early days, Hollywood have presented them as ethnically inferior than whites, and if we want to understand Hollywood's behaviour toward these miniorities, we must look at the picture it presents in its films.

### **1.2.1.Arabas And Muslims**

Scott J. Simon says in his article *Arabs in Hollywood: An Undeserved Image:* 'Hollywood films often produce erroneous images of the world and its inhabitants.'

Adding : 'negative stereotypes and mistaken representations of almost every minority group in the world have been portrayed in the movies-including blacks, Native Americans, Asians, and Arabs' And ' the Arab culture has been the most misunderstood and supplied with the worst stereotypes.' (SIMON 1)

A study of a series of films that distort the image of Arabs and Muslims in American cinema has been based on more than 900 films portraying Arabs as merciless and backward, terrorists and religious fanatics. In *Oh, God! You Devil!*(1984) George Burns, who represents Satan, is proud that Yasser Arafat is just one of his followers. In *St. Elmo's Fire*(1985) arabs are portrayed as having anomalous sexual orientation, and those dealers who are moving cocaine.(SHAHEEN 109)

The films of the 1990s depicts Arabs as terrorists seeking to shed blood and makebombings as in *True Lies*(1994). The events of *The Siege* start with the arrest of an Arab suspected of his involvement in some of the bombings in America, it is the worst film depicting Muslims and Arabs as terrorists. Through a survey of several American films,American cinema has not stopped describing Arabs and Muslims as a group of barbaric, ignorant and terrorists, andit is noteworthy that American critics have already stated that Hollywood has produced more than 210 films that make fun of Islam, Arabs and Muslims since 1986 until now(SHAHEEN 35)

Jack Shaheen adds that the image of the Arabs in Hollywood remains the same as that portrayed by the Europeans and orientalist, in which the mythical talk about the land of the Arabs, including stereotypes about the desert and tents, the half naked dancers, magic.Although the portrayal of the Arabs in this picture was in the early Hollywood, but the retention and preservation of the same image has not changed even in the cartoons produced after a decade, including Aladdin film, in which the hero Aladdin in the opening song says: 'oh i came from a land...where they cut off your ear if they do not like your face' (SHAHEEN 35) .Nassira Tami points out in her book that the image of Arab and Muslim in

American cinema is determined by five patterns beginning with the letter B (Five B'S) :  
Bedouin, belly Dancer, Bazaar man, Billionaire, Bomber.

### **1.2.2.Asians**

Hollywood has used white actors to play other ethnic roles since its founding in the early years of the twentieth century. At first, white actors used the makeup of the colored faces, such as black to play the roles of Blacks (blackface) and yellow to play the roles of Asians (yellowface).

Stars of Asian descent suffered racial discrimination, and despite the great successes they have achieved at various levels of art, actors were struggling to find a chance in Hollywood, and if they do, their roles will be repeated stereotypical roles. Nancy Wang Yuen wrote in her book *Reel Inequality: Hollywood Actors and Racism* : ' Racism, in the form of job exclusion and racially stereotyped roles, has defined the Hollywood film industry since its birth in the early 1900s' (Yuen 18)

Mary Pickford was the first white actress to paint her face in yellow to embody the Japanese character Cho-Cho-San in *Madame Butterfly*. It was followed by a large number of white actors who wore colorful faces to play the roles of Asians, such as *Doctor Strange* in which the character of the old Asian man was transformed into a white figure represented by British actress Tilda Swinton, and *Aloha* in which Emma Stone played a Chinese Air Force pilot (Force 1)

In the majority of a Asian films Asian character appears as that valiant man who leads a gang, or that undesirable partner who is preoccupied with his work. For women, one of the stereotypical characters is the Chinese girl who resembles the doll with its beautiful beauty, soft voice and long dark hair. After Bruce Lee's movies about martial arts, Asian depiction on the screen changed into "All Asians Know Martial Arts"(Kira Schacht 1)

In recent years, "model minority" became the most common stereotype for Asians, Ono said: "They might be scientists, doctors or in some technical field. By and large, they're

good students, come from good families and don't have any economic problems."(Kira Schacht 1)This stereotype interferes with "Asian and Nerdy" stereotype 'tech nerds, assistants, and doctors who are highly emasculated, desexualized character '(Sam Levin 1) Bandhu said: 'We're so sick and tired of seeing ourselves in those roles.'(Lauren Y. 1) It is clear from the above that Hollywood has often turned a blind eye to racist practices that have affected important stars in international cinema. While American films have always given a negative image on these minorities and helped spread these negative stereotypes of Arab, Muslims and Asians around the world.

### **1.3.The Evolution Of Black Character In Hollywood**

Back to the era of silent film (1910s-1920s) , the presence of black actors in American cinema is almost non-existent, even the roles of black characters were often assigned to white actors after painting their faces in black, known as the ' Blackface ',which became a common practice and continued in this way until the early days of silent film.This led to Black Hollywood (Goodykoontz)

In 1903, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was the first feature film which tells a story of a black character, and the great paradox is that the actor was a white man made up in blackface. This story was first written by Harriet Stowe in her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) as an opposed to the practices of slavery at that antebellum period. Stowe illustrated Uncle Tom as a hero, but after many adaptations, this hero became an amusement object (Turner 71)

After the fame and profits achieved by Uncle Tom, filmmakers needed to attract a large number of audience and therefore they went to produce such kind of films but using the blackface (Silk, C. and Silk, J 123)

In 1915, the system of slavery and racial intolerance spread by white citizens towards the African-American black population, many of whom were slaves owned by the plantation owners .*The Birth of a Nation* talks about the relationship between two American families during the American Civil War and the era of reconstruction. On the one hand, the

film was revolutionary, and one of the most important films in the history of American cinema; on the other hand, it was racist and called for white supremacy and portrayed the Ku Klux Klan as a heroic organization (125).

McEwan says :’ The film argues that giving black people rights was a terrible, terrible error, that they did all sorts of horrible things that actually they didn’t do, and that the noble Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was this wonderful saviour that saved America,” he says. “It couldn’t be any more wrong.’ (tom). This racist ideology and prejudiced mentality was not only towards black men , but even black women, when they were portrayed as older, obese and sexless women. In addition to the tragic mulatto and the mammy characters. (225).

During 1919, There was racial violence between whites and blacks, which making it difficult for the African American actors.This explains the lack of black Hollywood in that time (Silk, C. and Silk, J 130-131).The black filmic history has changed a little bit with the sound film era, precisely, in the golden age of Hollywood between (1930s and 1940s). It was full of events and transformations, in which the Second World War was the most important with its terrible horrors(155).

As a result, a change in Hollywood's course appeared to be a sudden change when a number of black actors appeared in a number of musical films such as : *Stormy Weather* and *Cabin in the Sky* in 1943, in which all of their actors and actress were Blacks, and all the roles assigned to them were ordinary of the kind that people exercise in their daily lives, but their roles were limited(190).They were also limited to the stereotypical depiction of black woman that was generally divided into two roles: the nanny role which was played by the two representatives Hattie McDaniel and Ethel Waters, and the comic relief role which was played by Step in Fetchit. Lena Horne an American singer, actress came and broke down that stereotypical depiction through her beauty, light complexion, and her rich talents which encouraged Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios to contract her and give her starring roles in a number of musical films.(Goodykoontz)

Black men began to appear on screen in the roles of brave warriors who sacrifice themselves for the sake of their own country, and for the victory over Nazism. In 1949, three films were screened *Home of the Brave*, *Pinky*, *Lost Boundaries* and the common factor was that they all dealt with the tragedy of racial persecution, which was caused by discrimination among people on the basis of color.(Goodykoontz)

*Pinky* was the first American film to address the problem of racial discrimination. The film's story revolves around a light-skinned black woman falls in love with white doctor, but he disdainful of her and discard her when he discover her true race. Paradoxically, *Pinky* film shows Hollywood hypocrisy. While the film deals with the problem of racial intolerance, the producers have given the starring role to the white actress.(Goodykoontz)

Despite the war, and despite its ending with Nazi defeat, Hollywood films were banned from showing a black man chasing a white woman. That was the case until 1957, when David Boyer, a black politician fell in love with Mavis Norman, an upper class white woman in *Island in the Sun*. However, this love had to end with separation for no other reason than it is not normal that love exists between blacks and white (Turner 71)

It was only six years after the romance on *Island in the Sun* when the presence of black actors in American cinema developed, with the emergence of a number of outstanding black actors who imposed their presence such as Sidney Poitier who won the academy award for best actor in *Lilies of the Field* (1964) being the first African-American male to receive an Oscar over the 36 years of Oscar's long life (Silk, C. and Silk, J 162)

As the civil rights movement escalated against apartheid, Stanley Kramer, directed his film *Guess who's coming to dinner* (1967), where a daughter brought her new fiancé to her upper-class family, not having told them he is black. While this was considered at that time a break of racial norms and traditions that intermarriage between races was banned in most parts of the United States, but the film ended with a win of her parents' satisfaction. This situation



would not have continued in any way, especially after the victories achieved in the civil rights movement by the leader Martin Luther King (210).

By the 1970s, American film saw a wave of black exploitative cinema called (Blaxploitation), it is a commercial cinema that relied on a number of new faces of black actors and young black singers, including many thrilling entertainment adventures. Although many people see it as a paper profit for black Hollywood, but it was depicting black men as violent and savages while black women were a tool of sex (Silk, C. and Silk, J 167-169).

With the advent of the 1980s, a constellation of black actors and directors began to emerge, including Eddie Murphy, Steven Spielberg an American director who made a quantum leap in the art of African-American films with his *The color purple* (1985) starring Oprah Winfrey and Whoopi Goldberg who won Golden Globe Awards for best actress in a Motion Picture . Followed by *Amistad* (1997) starring Morgan Freeman who won the NAACP Image Award. These films depicted Blacks in a positive way, while the stereotypical roles (a drug dealer, suspect, victim, pimp, prisoner) are still valid in Hollywood studios (Turner 155-156)

Spike Lee as well, a director who surprised The Cannes Festival in 1989 with his film *do the right thing* in which he made a story that may embarrass blacks, but did not hurt their dignity. The film shows in a nice way that the blacks have all the mind, intellect and culture, but the problem is that they criticize all around them except themselves, which limits their development and progress in the practical and human life. From here, blacks began to take social roles, and they could be a lover, a worker, a policeman, or so on. (165)

Now, black character is in the stage of accustoming people to the fact that he is like others, not very good and not very bad, and has no exception. And he used this opportunity to highlight his subject matter and concerns, which may be one of his priorities is to return to his harsh history (Silk, C. and Silk, J 162)

In short, the black character have always been present in the American film scene since the beginning of cinema, but their roles, functions and uses, whether behind or on screen,

have changed with the changing of social, economic and political conditions in American cinema. The black character have always been present in American films scene since the beginning of Hollywood institution, but their roles, functions and uses, whether behind or on screen, have changed with the changing of social, economic and political conditions in American cinema.

### **Conclusion**

The American film industry has witnessed a major development for minorities such as Arabs, Muslims, Asians, and Blacks of different race, gender, and religion. Particularly the development of black character in American films as one of the most important minorities that contributed to Hollywood industry in general and American films in particular. This development of black character faced many obstacles and passed through many different stages before reaching what it is now.

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## **Chapter two: the representation of the African American women in Hollywood films**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter we will dive in the development of the African American women in Hollywood ,moreover in this chapter will spot light to the civil rights movement, and it influence of Hollywood films .also this chapter will highlights on the black feminism

### **2.1 .The historical overview of African American women in Hollywood films**

Since the first appearance of African American women in Hollywood in films, they were stereotypically depicted .The black woman character classified in films as they are classless, violent and problematic .This image mainly goes back to the ear of slavery. Although this image is misleading and incorrect but it was widely accepted as a fact. Gloria J. Gibson-Hudson states that” in mainstream film, black women are sexualized, passive, one-dimensional characters, often portrayed as ‘other’ in relation to black and white men and white women” (Gibson-Hudson and Gloria J 43).Black women are stuck in a practical , white super racist narrative, reflecting myths, degrading stereotypes and visions of black womanhood, which highly limits the extent to which audiences will see black women as empowering and resistant “ (Gibson-Hudson and Gloria J 43-44).Thinkers and historians classified the presence of the black women into three types

#### **2.1.1 The mammy character**

One of the most frequent stereotypes to emerge from film is the mammy character. “The names *Mammy* and *Aunt* were both used in Southern antebellum fiction to describe a role and a person within the plantation household who served as a baby nurse, cook, and general domestic worker” (Parks) . The mammy stereotype refers to strong, ugly, and masculine black women who scarified her life to serve a white families. The mammy is often portrayed as an overweight, large-breasted, Motherly figure, who served Caucasian families in the South (Chen, G. M., Williams, S. and Hendrickson, N. 115) .

Also West states that the Mammy is common stereotype image of African American women which back to the slave era. West assume that there is historical reasons behind the creation of mammy character ,she claimed that historians ,writers ,and films maker created the mammy character to make the pain and struggle of black females seen not that hard ,and also to hide the truth of black women's life in which they were maltreated ,tortured and rapped .Moreover, Melissa Harris Perry states that the reason behind the birth of the mammy character is to justify past enslavement and thralldom, and it was commove current oppressions and segregation .

The mammy stereotype comes into the picture in Hollywood in 1939. Hattie McDaniel was the first African American woman to win an academy award for playing a role of mammy in film” gone with wind.” In 2011, Octavia Spencer played the same role in film” the help”. Even it is more than 72 years the mammy character is still played in Hollywood films. Bogel describes” the mammy stereotype as a large, a sexual and dark woman who has more loyalty to the white family that she serves the owner family rather than her own family “ (Bogle 9) .



**Figure 1: Madea Image**

The mammy character were over display in Hollywood through the Medea character in Tyler Perry movies. The Medea character in Tyler Perry films consider as the modern version of the mammy character. According to McCoy “The Medea’s attitude

is not improper as a male or as a female, rather it just a perfect showcase of what a stereotype is, which is a belief composed to drift away from the truth “. (McKoy, Tyler Perry and The Weight of Misrepresentation. 127-146).

### **2.1.2The jezebel character**

According to Hill Collins “The jezebel stereotype is portraying black women who have uncontrolled sexual appetites” (Hill-Collins 127) . In another words the jezebel character describes the African American women as sexual tool, women who used her body to get what she want .Dunn said “the jezebel is a woman motivated by her sexual abilities to use men to get what she wants” (Dunn 114)

Jackson states that the reason behind the creation of the jezebel character is to justify intimidation, menace that white owner was applying on black women .actually using the black females a sexual tool is not a new thing in Hollywood films or in American culture.



**Figure 2: Image of Sarah Baartman .**

Sarah Baartman was a symbol of stereotype depiction of African women .she was born in extern cape in South African (Natasha Gordon 6) . Her life was full of difficulties,

suffer and tragedy. Her mother died when she was two years and her father died when she was an adolescent. In 1810, Sarah Baartman was brought to London by Hendrik Gazer (Natasha Gordon 7), and she was placed on display as an entertainment attraction for European audiences. "She standing naked under to gaze of European audience, they began by staring at her in disgusting way and laughing at her" (Washington, H.A. 85). Sarah Baartman was given to animal trainer in Paris where she was put in cage and forced to behave in an animalistic manner (83). She died in 1815, at the age of 28 (Netto 150). Unfortunately, even after her death she could not rest in peace. Her body was further violated by who claimed to be interested in science.

Harris-Perry states that in early twentieth century African American women tried to resist this stereotype by advocating temperance and piety, thus many African American women were afraid that if they put on make-up, wore revealing clothes or expressed affection in public, it would confirm the image of the jezebel". (Harris-Perry 59-61).

### **2.1.3 The sapphire character**

The sapphire stereotype is another historical character of African American women in Hollywood films. West state that The Sapphire, also known as the angry black woman (ABW) or sister with attitude. According to Harris-Perry, the origin of term sapphire was series Amos 'n 'Andy(1951-1953) which was broadcasted on television, starring a character named Sapphire Stevens. She was the epitome of the angry black woman and because of the show's popularity and the name stuck in people minds. The sapphire character describes the black women as

"She is tart-tongued and emasculating, one hand on a hip and the other pointing jabbing (or arms akimbo), violently and rhythmically rocking her head, mocking African American men for offenses ranging from being unemployed to sexually pursuing white women." (Harris-Perry 52)

The Sapphire/ABW stereotype used it for different purposes. “It is a social control mechanism that is employed to punish black women who violate the social norms that encourage them to be passive, servile, nonthreatening, and unseen” (Pilgrim 121) . In other words, because their passion and righteous indignation is often misread as irrational anger, this image can be used to silence and shame Black women who dare to challenge social inequalities, complain about their circumstances, or demand fair treatment. The studies on the sapphire character are very lack, this is because African American women identify themselves as “angry” and “tough” as key elements of their personality.

## **2.2. Definition and Historical background of the civil rights movement**

Even if the civil war had officially abolished slavery, but it didn't end Racial discrimination against black Americans. More than century after the civil war, the blacks were suffering from segregation. They had no voting rights, they were separated from whites among public facilities. This segregation was not limited to southern states; it was situated across The United States. The civil rights movement was a struggle for social justice that took place during the 1950s and 1960s. the civil rights movement aimed to end the “Jim crow system” .Jim Crow system is a racial discrimination in the public facilities and government services. The civil rights moments was rejection of this system of segregation and fought against it. The basic principles of CRM were peace and non-violent actions.

Rose park case was considered as incident that led the opening door to for the civil rights movement. Rosa Park was seen as the mother of the modern civil rights movement after she was arrested. The story of Rosa Park started in 1955 when she found a seat on a Montgomery. In that time Segregation system was applied in all facilities including buses. Blacks must seat on the back section and the whites in the affront section of the bus. Rosa Parks complied. When a white man got on the



bus and couldn't find a seat in the white section, the bus driver instructed Parks and three other blacks to give up their seats. Parks refused thus she was arrested.

The blacks refused this segregation system by different ways .They created organizations and labour unions to defend the blacks, they set up Sit-ins, boycotts, and marches. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People THE NAACP was established in 1909 in New York and it considered as the oldest and largest civil rights organization. One of the main achievements of THE NAACP was in 1954 when the Supreme Court in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* that rejected separate white and black school systems and therefore overturned the "separate but equal" doctrine". (Berry 11).

By side THE NAACP, there was another association fought for the same reason which is The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was founded on the University of Chicago campus in 1942s. It became one of the leading activist organizations in the early years of the American civil rights movement. In the early 1960s the core launched a series of initiative one of them was the Freedom Rides, aimed at desegregating in public facilities, the Freedom Summer voter registration project. (Editors).

Sit-ins, boycotts, and marches were another type of resisting the segregation system. The march on Washington was a historic, massive gathering led by the members of the NAACP and the core .the officially titled the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom." The march took place on August 28, 1963. When some 250,000 gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. . The most significance event happened when Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous "I Have a Dream" . The march aimed to draw attention to continuing challenges, display faced by African Americans.

The Civil Rights Act “was a more radical document than the bill his predecessor introduced to Congress. The act outlawed segregation in public accommodations and empowered the federal government to file suit to desegregate school districts.” (David Brown and Clive Webb, 308) . The civil rights acts prohibits discrimination of all kinds based on race, religion, and national origin, also it banned discrimination in public. The civil rights act established the federal Community Relations Service in order help the cases of individuals and communities. It also established a federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).also black schools were provided with financial and technical aids.

In 1965, The Voting Rights Act prohibited any discriminatory practices which prevented voting. It had a transformative impact on southern politics by enabling blacks to become more active participants in the electoral process.

The Black Power movement is a new way in which black fights for their rights. But Unlike of the Civil Rights era, in which it was peaceful, the black Power movement were open to use violence as a means of achieving their aims. On 24 July 1967 something had changed. Advocate Lincoln Lynch. Said: “There’s a new movement afoot,” “it’s not civil rights any longer—it’s the movement of revolution. . . . Some call it black power, others may call it the black revolution, but it’s all the same”. (Hill 234)

Although the huge of achievements in civil rights ear, black have still been treated unfairly and are not always socially equal, this mean that the struggle for better life and equal rights didn’t finish yet.

### **2.3.The Repercussion of end segregation on Hollywood films**

George p. Hunt, managingeditor of life magazine, stat that in 1965 that “the success of civil rights reformdepended largely on the media’s willingness to engage in in-depth coverage of the race issue”. (L.James 52). Hollywood was always affected by social and

political issues .In the Second World War, Hollywood shifted from entertainment films toward social and political criticism. The success of the civil rights movements and the end the ear of segregating had deep impact on films. After applying Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the establishment of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) , blacks become more involved into the film making industry. The blacks became activated in the moving making industry, their thoughts and ideas are reflected on screen.

Although pre-civil rights saw little to no integration of blacks into the film industry, the image of black on screen had a bit of change. The early 1950s saw a type of film known as the “Negro Cycle,” which were produced and directed by whites, but humanized blacks on screen, show casting the real struggle that black face in their life .“These films took advantage of the new post-war liberalism and pointed white audiences toward acknowledgment and respect for African American rights” (Rhines 40). This type of film had no direct relationship into the Civil Rights movements but the depiction of deplorable treatment towards blacks and the message of inequality may raise awareness of this unjust divide in society.

“Negro Cycle “Films were the first to shed light on real issues facing blacks in society: “poverty, interracial marriages and finding fulfilment in the narrow confines determined by a hostile white world” (Bogle 195) . Although these films may have intended to show reality of black life’s ,in fact the film were full of stereotypesand Prejudgments which like all stereotyped representations, and prejudgments contained a little truth, surrounded by an even larger lie. Blaxploitation was another type films emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it is considered an ethnic subgenre of the general category of exploitation films. Blaxploitation films almost made outside Hollywood, with low budget .Blaxploitation movies were directed to the black Audience.

Blacks and black activists groups such the naccap, core were refusing these stereotype image that black were portrayed with. “From the late 1940s through the 1960s, with a strategy of mass protest that later exploded into rebellion, blacks affected changes in all areas of American society. Black folk created a political and cultural atmosphere in which the issues of race and freedom could not be ignored,” (Guerrero 29) . As Guerrero states in *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film*:

“For the racial ideology and stereotypes that are but part of dominant cinema’s work are not fixed or static. Instead, they are a set of dynamic, lived relations and social transactions; the filmic conventions and codes of racial subordination are continually being reworked, shifting under the pressure of material, aesthetic, and social conditions,” (113).

In 1969, Gordon Parks famous Parks was the first African American to direct a Hollywood feature film, *The Learning Tree*, Parks said about his film; “I had 14 or 15 Black people behind the camera for the first time in the history of films. There was a Black director. The producer was Black. The scoring was done by a Black man. The third cameraman for the first time was a black man,” (Rhines 41).

The NAACP was the first organisation for racial equality, it was organizing a massive boycott of the major film industries as a tactic to increase racial minority presence in film industry. In 1982, Janet Waska, author of *Movies and Money*, assesses “The state of black employment in U.S. feature films has not improved and behind the camera opportunities for black filmmakers have dried up.” Over a ten-year period from 1972 to 1982, the number of black oriented feature films dropped dramatically, and it was reported that in the early 1980s, “Blacks were not even getting their traditional exploitive or stereotypical roles,” (82).

A study by the Directors Guild of America (DGA) found out that “of 237 directors, Columbia had hired only one minority; Fox two of 22 146; Universal nineteen of 770; Warner Bros. one of 147; none at Paramount, MGM/UA, or Disney” (Rhines 83). These results indicate that lack of minorities who hold power positions in the film industry. The majority of whites took the positions of authority, which is considered as a big problem. White directors have a big impact on the visual aspects of a film, and the themes of the film and the way they are formed. They dominate everything even what an audience should gain from the cinematic experience.

This extreme imbalance of racial, ethnic, and most likely gender, influences in the film industry produces a plethora of films which depict the same values, ideals, and visions and in turn skews how society views the world through the naturalization of attitudes provided by the media. Opportunities for blacks have increased and continue to develop in the Hollywood film, but this development is usually at the expense of previous oppressions and prejudices. Rhines provides an example of how widespread and noticeable imperfections in the film industry leads to change,

“After World War II, white America’s general sympathy for the Civil Rights movement allowed blacks to direct Hollywood films and to play heroic, non-threatening roles on screen. The Black Power movement allowed blacks to strike out at whites and to celebrate cultural traits distinct from those of white America,” (Guerrero 50).

These “advancements,” it was not until the mid-1980’s that the American film industry completely underwent structural changes, which allowed blacks greater access to positions of control behind the camera. Guerrero, an African-American film historian and professor of film and African-American studies at New York University wrote,

“The important point about this frustrating chronology of fluctuating industry racism is that Hollywood is a system entirely motivated by short-term profit. Because of this, the industry is conservative and changes only when forced to do so by the combined pressures of multiple influences, no matter how just or important any single condition may be” (93).

These multiple influences usually include these pressures it begins to take action, but not always in the way activists expect. Because of these representations are ever changing to meet the desires of the viewer and can never fully or realistically represent those whom they are trying to imitate.

#### **2.4. Development of the black feminism thoughts and its impact on the Hollywood:**

“The Civil Rights movement was embroiled in the struggle against racial inequality, and the Black Power movement emphasized national self-determination (Brewer) the late 1960s into the 1970s. (Brewer 1)” .In conjunction the civil rights movements the black power movement and the second wave of feminism, the black feminist started floating on the surface. Collins describes Black feminist thought as it is the black women are self-reliant and confident in fighting gender, race, class and oppression.

In the beginning, a lot of African American women were moved to the U.S to work as slaves under a state of Oppression and persecution since that time African American women were maltreated. According to Hill” Oppression describes any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group sexuality, nation, age, and ethnicity among others constitute major forms of oppression in the United States.” (Hill-Collins 4) Also Hill states that the oppression of African American women has three dimensions which they are the political dimension, economic dimension and the ideological dimension.

First, political dimension involves not given African American women any kinds of political rights in which black woman were forbidden to vote and they often drop out of school before being full literates and also they were excluded from public office. Second, “the exploitation of Black women’s labour essential to U.S .Capitalism—the “iron pots and kettles” symbolizing Black women’s long-standing ghettoization in service occupations—represents the economic dimension of oppression “(Collins 4) .

Finally, the ideological dimension refers to the image of black women in the U .S society and culture .The term ideology refers to group of ideas and thoughts reflecting the

interests of a group of people. This image includes mammies, jezebel, and sapphire stereotypes .this image is widely accepted which end up justifying the ideologies affixed to African American women. Hill Collin assumes that “this larger system of oppression works to suppress the ideas of Black women intellectuals and to protect elite White male interests and worldviews” (Collins 5).

Maria Stewart” was one of the first U.S. Black feminists to champion the utility of Black women’s relationships with one another in providing a community for Black women’s activism and self-determination.” (Collins 2) . She was the first black woman to lecture in public on political issues. Stewart is known for powerful speech s, she expressed in Boston in the early 1830s – a time when no woman, black or white, dared to address an audience from a public platform. Maria steward refused the negative images of black womanhood that was common in her times, stating that gender, race and class oppression are the main causes of black women’s poverty. For the Stewart the strength of self-definition was very important. “She was among the first strong black feminist in the United States who fought for the voice of black women to be heard and respected” (Jumoke 38). Maria was source of inspiration for a lot Woman in like: Barbara Smith, Toni Morrison, Sojourner Truth, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Anna Julia Cooper.

The participation of black women in Hollywood films had increased over time. Cheryl Boone Isaacs was the first African American women president in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Also Taraji P Henson, and Viola Davis have been recognized in the academy awards and Oscars. African American women have formed independent knowledge on how to redevelop all the dimensions of oppression by developing black feminist understanding and tradition. The idea of recovering lost knowledge meant a lot to the African American women. Recovering black women’s ideas however entails reinterpreting, identifying, and in a lot of ways analysing the works of black women thinkers individually,

who were able to preserve their idea. Black women intellectuals helped out in the development of black feminist theories.

However, being a black intellectual doesn't mean being educated or an academia, rather it entails fighting and struggling on behalf of black women. African American women face related challenges in a society where history and racism have devalued African women. However, these challenges every individual African American woman does not have the same experience; neither do they interpret their experiences the same way. If one African American woman with low self-esteem and another African American woman with confidence should walk through a hall where white women call them ugly, the way they will both respond to this challenge will be very different

Black feminist thought is responsible for improving black women's experience. The black feminist thought holds the knowledge that assist black women to survive and resist inferiority. African American women often find their selves misrepresented either as a result of slave history or negative ideology. The black feminist thought however empowered African American women and triggered contention.

Black women and the media now have an interconnection that has a lot to do with sex and race. Film is a socio-cultural body that has a vast effect on how black women are viewed and how black w men see their selves for over a century, black women have been attacked with different like the jezebel and mummies, but the present generation of black women are able to fight these images with the black feminist thought

The negative images of black women in films are intended to make racism, poverty, sexism and other injustice a normal and natural occurrence in everyday life Whether Hollywood pays attention to black women or not, black women tell their story with the distinction that speaks to the intricacy of their experience.



## **Conclusion**

The representation of the African American women in Hollywood films had totally changed the over years .the end of segregation had deep impact on the American society. The black feminist thoughts came as a result of it. All these circumstances, reflected pointedly in the image African American women in Hollywood films in which it became more realistic.

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## Chapter Three: Data Analysis and Finding

### Introduction

In order to see how the black character are assigned in these films (the color purple 1985....) It is important to mention from the beginning that we apply the conceptual analysis In order to figure out how historical stereotype of the African American woman which includes the mammy, sapphire and jezebel used. And all this was form the black feminist thoughts angle.

### 3.1. The Analysis of the color purple (1985)

Steven Allan Spielberg is one of the most popular American filmmaker and producer in film history, born on 18 December 1948. He is considered as the founder of the new Hollywood era. One of the most noticeable work of Spielberg is the color purple.

The color purple is a 1985 American coming-of-age period drama film. With three African- American main female characters Celia (Whoopi Goldberg) , Sofia (Oprah Winfrey), and shugavery (Margaret Avery).

The film based on Alice Walker's novel of the same name .the novel won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. It received eleven Academy Award nominations, including two for Goldberg and Winfrey.It was also the first feature-length film directed by Spielberg. The film covers 40 years of a life of a black woman who endures incredible oppression at the hands of the men in her life until she finally learned to stand up for herself and acknowledge her special gifts.

The story of the film is about a young African- American woman who raised in a male-dominated world when she is driven to believe that her life's role is to serve men. This film depicts the many struggles of African- American women in the depressionera. Celie ,sofia , and Shug Avery are three dominant characters in the film .

The mammy stereotype refers to elderly, big, and ugly caring and always cooking and cleaning. "The mammy figure is characterized by the woman's lack of sex appeal and an

overweight frame. This is not lacking in Abilene's character as she herself tells us „babies like fat, they like big fat legs too“ ( Tayler) , Celie embodies many of those characteristics .

The whole film focused on celie's life from when she was fourteen years old and end when she is forty-four .Celie life's was hugged with struggle and suffering . She born in poor family. At the age of 14 she was raped by the men called “pa “she was considered him as her father. Her two kids were given to another family. Cilie was shy, frightened girl, and she didn't fight for her rights . Her father “pa” forced her to a marriage Albert a Widowed men with four kids. Celie was treated as a slave rather than a wife .Albert was always beat her. He married her just for the seek of cleaning and cooking



**Figure 3: Celie cleaning**

The similarities between the mammy character and celie appears clearly in many scenes, when her husband's mistress, Shug, comes to the house to recuperate and Celie becomes her nurse by nature. At the end of the film Celie escaped from her husband house when she realised that she didn't deserve all what happened to her.

The character played by Shug Avery is close to jezebel stereotype. “The Jezebel stereotype represents African American women as man-eaters with inappropriate or insatiable sexual

appetites” (Hill Collins 83). There are a lot of scenes show how shug character is similar to the jezebel stereotype. One of the most noticeable scene when she made a remark how ugly Celie is. Shug Avery is a strong woman, she is flashy blues singer. She is sexually free and unashamed of it, enjoying Albert’s company whether married or not. When shug(as it mentioned in figure 3)performed her song, with her red dress she could dominate an audience and dominate her male lovers also.



**Figure 4: Shug performance**

The sapphire stereotype were displayed through Sofia character. The Sapphire stereotype refers to a sassy woman who can be violent at any time. Sofia is a strong, independent woman who refused completely the white systematic oppression on the black, and also refused any kind of control .Sofia’s head always was up, and when she walks seems like she running.

The scenes of Sofia were full of violence as rejection for the black situation in that time. Sofia has been in prison for several years because she beat a white men.

In the end, through the lenses of the black feminist thoughts, African American women in this movie were stereotypically depicted. Steven Spielberg represents them in the negative way.

### 3.2 The analysis of the hidden figures movie (2016)

*Hidden Figures* is a biographical drama film, released in 2016. The film is adapted from a book the same name. *Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Who Helped Win the Space Race*. It was written by Margot Lee Shetterly. The film was produced by Donna Gigliotti, Peter Chernin, Jenno Topping and Pharrell Williams, and it was directed by Theodore Melfi. The film was a quantum leap on several levels, it showcased a real story of three black mathematicians' females who worked at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) during the Space Race. MS Spencer said "this is a female-driven movie about contributions that women really made, to our world, not just our society." (Cara Buckley)

The film tells the monumental story of Katherine Johnson (Taraji P. Henson), Dorothy Vaughan (Octavia Spencer) and Mary Jackson (Janelle Monáe); three African-American female mathematicians and physicists, also known as 'human computers', who were some of the most influential brains behind NASA's success in launching John Glenn into orbit around the Earth in 1962.

The film breaks the stereotype image that was related to African American women. Although the film Ms. Gigliotti claims that "the Hidden Figures story line had everything and more: the Cold War, the space race, the damages of segregation and racial and gender inequality, all set against the country's burgeoning civil rights struggles".

Through this film we see a great change in the image of black women in which the stereotype characters are nearly disappeared or adopted. The mammy character appears through Dorothy; she was a quiet, overweight woman who cared about her family and her friends. Dorothy had a battle with her condescending boss Vivian Mitchell (Kirsten Dunst) to gain supervisor status in NASA's West Area Computing division.



The most significant of scene that introduces the mammy character is when Vivian Mitchell (Kirsten Dunst) asked Dorothy to take over the boxes, and Dorothy accepted her ask without any kind of rejection or refuses.



**Figure6: when vivsian mitchell aked dorothy to take over the boxes .**

In another hand, The sapphire stereotype was manifested through Katherine Johnson (Taraji P. Henson), and Mary Jackson (Janelle Monáe) characters. Even if they had different stories, and different life style, both of them had the same characteristics, they refused any kind of segregation in a direct and strong way. Katherine Johnson (Taraji P. Henson) she is the main character in the film .she was single mother. She worked in the West Area Group at Langley to provide for her mother and three daughters. Her attitude and her outfit (the eye cat glasses) represent a strong, educated, and smart women.

One of the most significant scenes in hidden figure film is the scene when Katherine screamed in the face of her manager (Al Harrison, Kevin Costner) and she told him about her suffering in the workplace where there was no colored bathrooms and coffee station .

## Hidden figures



**Figure7: Katherine screamed on her manager's face.**

In addition, the sapphire stereotype appears through the role of Mary Jackson (Janelle Monáe), although her appearance in the film was little but effective. Mary Jackson was a mother of two kids. She was elegant and always looked like she a red lipstick which shows strength and impulse. Scene of Mary Jackson when she stand front of the judge to file a petition for permission to attend class at Hampton High School. She stand in strong , confined way in order to convince the judge also in beginning of film, when the policeman determined to help them when they were late to work. Mary agreed to his request but the way she was reimbursed seemed to order him. Even if when She was driving behind him she was driving in hysterical way.

### **3.3 .The Analysis of For Colored Girls (2010)**

The movie *For Colored Girls* is a 2010 American drama, written, directed and produced by Tyler Perry with cast which includes Whoopi Goldberg, Thandie Newton, Kimberly Elise, Loretta Devine, Anika Noni Rose, Janet Jackson, Tessa Thompson, , Kerry Washington, and Phylicia Rashad nine characters who playing different roles. The movie was adapted

from a theatre piece by NtozakeShangeentitled *For Colored Girls who have considered suicide/ when the rainbow is enuf*.

*For Colored Girls* is the first of Perry's movies not based on his own script, because he had many stage plays written and produced by him during the 1990s and early 2000s. Tyler Perry who is an American actor, playwright, filmmaker, and comedian his films were characterized by diversity in style and he was very successful. Greg Braxton who was a writer for the Los Angeles Times says: " Tyler Perry, the most consistently successful black independent filmmaker in Hollywood"(Greg Braxton)

The movie centres on how Black women experience all kinds of adversity they face throughout their everyday lives( love, abandonment, domestic violence, rape,infidelity, and abortion) and how they fight as women of color.It consists of nine main characters playing different roles, but only seven of them were as in the play with seven colors, each lady is represented by a color : red (Joanna), orange (Tangie), yellow (Yasmine) , green (Juanita) , blue ( Kelly) , purple (Nyla), brown(Crystal), while the other two ladies Alice and Gilda their color were made only for the movie.

The lady in red a fictional magazine company owner called Robe Rouge, suffers from her husband Carl who invests into a failed company with her money and they get into a dispute, then he invites her to an opera performance when she sees the way he looks at another men. Finally he admits to being homosexual because of her controlling nature.

The lady in orange who was raped by her grandfather (her mother's father), to find out in the latter that her grandfather raped her mother a well and took her virginity when she was fifteen. The lady in yellow a dance teacher who invites her friend Bill into her house for dinner but he rapes her in a savage way, after that she becomes too traumatized from her rape. The lady in green a nurse and runs a non-profit organization, she suffers from her lover Frank who leaves her every time and can't decide between her and another woman, but she finally breaks her relationship with him forever.

The lady in blue a government case worker, goes with her husband to a gynaecologist, who informs her that she cannot become pregnant anymore because of her fallopian tubes which are scarring caused by an untreated STD. The lady in purple One of the lady in blue's dance students, who loses her virginity in her graduation night and becomes pregnant, then she goes to her sister (lady in orange) to give her money for the abortion but her sister sends her to a back-alley abortionist instead of giving her money. The lady in brown Beau Willie asks her to marry him once again but after she refuses he takes the children and throw them from fifth-story window. She is shocked by the death of her children and tried to suicide.

In this movie we found out that Jezebel character, Sapphire character and Mammy character are showcased in a modern way. As we observe the role played by Crystal and Gilda is close to mammy stereotype when we see Crystal as a weak woman who bears violence just for her children, and working outside the house only for them. While we see Gilda as a women serving to others who lives alone and take care of her neighbours and try to solve their problem, her mammy character appears when she is holding her neighbour's children and save them as they are her children. So this was a modern version of the mammy character which were only appears as that big and ugly woman who just cleaning and cooking only.

The sapphire stereotype refers to two characters as well, Alice who lives in a messy house and refuses any kind of help, also she is all the time angry of her daughters and fighting with them in order to guide them to the right path as in the scene when she get mad with her daughter Tangie. And Juanita the second character who fights her lover any time. The scenes of Juanita were full of violence. One of the most noticeable scene is when she asked for help from Jo but this latter refuses to help her. Here Juanita get mad and starts screaming out loud. But the character of Juanita is more close to the sapphire character than Alice character.

The Jezebel stereotype were displayed through the lady in orange Tangie who is sexually free, she always using bad and sexual words. She was raped by her grandfather. Then

she becomes working in a night club and enjoying men's company whether they are married or not. She uses sex as a form of power. All this is to forget her past and pain. And to forget all the events that make her the way she is. Through this movie Tyler Perry tries to tell us about the experiences of African-American women and convey a message that women like these exist everywhere but they found their voices after a long silence. But like all other movies, *For Colored Girls* was criticized, some critics see it as a great achievement. Critic Marshall Fine in the Huffington Post says: "So let's just say that *For Colored Girls* is a barely competent film (which is a big step up for Perry), illuminated by luminous performances." (Fine) Also, Matt Zoller Seitz of Salon.com says: "For Colored Girls Perry's 'most problematic work. It's also his most ambitious.'"

From the other hand, some critics see that this movie cannot be wonderful like the play. Simon Braund, the British author known for his book *The Greatest Movies You'll Never See: Unseen Masterpieces by the World's Greatest Directors*, says "Tyler Perry's drama is beautifully acted but Ntozake Shange's multiple, interlocking narratives ultimately defy his efforts to bring them to the screen." (Braund)

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter we had analysed three movies of different time production which are *The Color Purple* (1986), *For Colored Girls* (2010), and *Hidden Figures* (2016). We followed conceptual analysis as a method in our analysis. We found out that there was a slight change or some changes in the representation of African American women in Hollywood films. We could notice that this image became more realistic over the years, maybe not in a positive way, but it became represented in a way that is accurate or true to life. As we observed with the last movie *Hidden Figures*, when the three stereotypes did not appear in the same image we used to see.

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## General Conclusion

Hollywood is a pioneer in film industry . It is considered as an international institution that includes various races, religions, and social classes. Today African American women have a great position in this industry. The focus of this study is to analyse how African American women are portrayed in Hollywood films, in which three Hollywood movies were selected. Aside the African American women depiction, the study focused on how African American women are portrayed in the historical stereotype of mammy, jezebel and sapphire and also focus on the influence of the civil rights movement.

Based on the data analysis of this study, black women are more illustrated in negative way rather than positive. The analysis borrowed from this study indicates that African American woman are always *showcased* in a bad way; and this appears through *thecolor purple* and *Forcolored girls*. These two movies show black women as they are useless, weak, pitiful humans rather than joyful. Black females are represented as they are satisfied with their miserable situation and they are always attend to make the other's life better than theirs. As we mentioned above that black females were represented negatively, *Hidden figures* contract this negative image by introducing them positively. Through this movie we notice that there is a slight change in the way African American are demonstrated.

On the other hand, we found out that the three historical stereotypes (the mammy, the sapphire, the jezebel) were well pronounced in the three movies. The analysis derived from this study shows that every African American woman has either one or all of these stereotypes. However, the use of these stereotypes are differ from story to another and adapt from one genre to another ( fiction and non-fiction). We can see this through the three films. The mammy stereotypes appear in different manners. The mammy character refers to a nurturer, a person who cares about the others, and who serves everyone without complaining. Through the analysis we found out that the mammy stereotype took a new face over years, and this is obvious in the color purple1989 the mammy character was expressed in all its

meaning, but in the two other films we saw a bit of change in which it has been updated in a modern way, and that exaggeration in description decreased a little bit.

In addition, the sapphire just like the mammy stereotype, it has been changed for the better over time, and this brighten up when we compare between Katherine in Hidden figures with Sophia in The color purple. Both of them represented the sapphire character, but in sophia's character it seems more vulgar and savage. While with Katherine it seems lessunfriendly and more self-esteem.By contrast, the jezebel stereotype didn't know any kind of change, but it is nolonger used as usual, as in the case of Hidden figures.

In this study we had focus on the influence of the Civil Rights movement on the representation of the African American women. CRM has long-term effects on the American society . also it influenced Hollywood industry over several levels. It is clear that CRM had improve the opportunities of blacks behind the scenes, also we noticed that CRM had a positive impact on black females representations in films. Although we can not feel that change only after three decades. In defense on what we mentioned above, that movement itself have not direct cause on the change, but due to its results, such as social integration, litigation, and Equal Employment Opportunity which contributed in the development of the African American women representation on screen.

Nowadays, forty years after CRM we can notice that the image of African American women had changed into a positive way , and became more realistic , and this is due to Mrs Michelle Barak Obama foundation which aimed to improve the Black women position in side and out side Hollywood .

Eventually, it is important to note that the conducted research aimed primarily at exploring the depiction of African American women in Hollywood movies. Nevertheless, we didn't take into account other aspects related to the image of the black women in general .We had focus only on movies. As a result, a further studies may be carried out in order to



highlight a wider scope, such as, television series and programs, or may also explore another category of minorities.

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