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**The Impact of Slave Mothers' Sufferings and Efforts on
Overcoming Bondage in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
by Harriet Ann Jacobs.**

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Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture

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DEDICATION

To those who believed in me, to my dear teachers, to Mrs. Chahat

To those who helped me through my hard times,

To my Mother's soul, to my father, to my lover,

To all my dear teachers and colleagues,

To my family members and my friends I dedicate my work.

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the theme of slave mothers and violence in Harriet Jacobs *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. As a slave narrative writer, Harriet Ann Jacobs depicts her life under slavery and sheds lights on the violence and sufferings slave mothers and women faced. Like the other slave narrative writers, Jacobs aims at portraying violence and discrimination slave mothers experienced to maintain their freedom and that of their children. Therefore, through the description of the oppression and violence black slave mothers faced, the research attempts to analyze the themes of motherhood, oppression and overcoming slavery and the influence of religion, literacy, and sisterhood on slave mothers' freedom.

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Introduction

Slave narratives women writers have shown great focus on the various accounts of physical and psychological oppression practiced on slave females under the institution of slavery. Black women experienced various kinds of oppression and torture both spiritual and mental. Their lives were open to whippings, raping, and murdering. In these accounts, they highlight the amount of violence and humiliation imposed on slave females in the Southern States under the control of their white oppressive masters. Moreover, they represent the precious efforts and sacrifices presented by slave mothers and women in general to overcome and defeat bondage and cruelty.

This research will attempt to analyze the key themes of violence imposed on Black slaves in addition to oppression in relation to slave mothers and women. Furthermore, the theme of resistance and refusal of violence by Black females and mothers will be explored.

The present study will rely on some features and concepts related to Black Feminist approach and literary criticism to examine and explore the different kinds of violence and exploitation practiced on slave women and mothers in *Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl* written by Harriet Ann Jacobs (1961). The black women had suffered discrimination and maltreatments, first, based on their gender as women, and secondly on their race and social class as black slaves. Therefore, black women in the slave narratives are portrayed as inferior and are exposed to variant types of assault and offense. In other words, females suffered from blackness and slavery in addition to oppressed femininity. The resisting power and actions used by slave mothers challenged humiliation and cruelty of slave's law and system. Slavery had degraded

slave mothers of everything; they were denied the basic rights of human beings including the right to experience motherhood freely.

This study will attempt to spotlight how the main black female characters of the autobiography in question had experienced violence, both sexual and psychological. They bore the pains of torments and cruelties and accepted inferiority believing that it was their fate. Also, how other slave mothers found support in religion, faith and literacy to challenge the chains of enslavement. As a consequence, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* affirms that not all mothers and women accepted slavery; some of them resisted, as the main protagonist and autobiographer. Harriet Jacobs used the penname Linda Brent to depict the life story of a brave mother who defied the chains of slavery and broke the hypocrite pride of her cruel master. The autobiography, therefore, gave voice to oppressed slave mothers and presented them as warriors who defied slavery and segregation.

Eventually, the present dissertation will explore the theme of overcoming slavery, bondage and discrimination through sisterhood and solidarity. Black feminist works and writings often describe how black women do not accept frustration and the sense of disillusionment caused by the obligatory inferiority imposed by slavery and discrimination. Consequently, they rejected enslavement and sexual harassment and raised above them all to gain their freedom and mainly the autonomy of their identities and that of their children.

This work consists of three chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical one. It includes a brief overview of slavery in the United States. It considers the origins of slavery particularly in America. The second part of this chapter focuses on slave narratives as a literary genre. It first gives some definitions of the American slave narratives, what are they about and what are the major themes they discuss. It then

analyses the structure of this genre of literature. It also refers to some prominent slave narrative writers and their major works and literary productions that were written to denounce and terminate slavery and human bondage. This part focuses on how this literary genre contributed in the blacks' resistance, mainly by women who defied and overcame all kinds of torture practiced on them under the name of civilization and Christianity.

The second chapter deals with the themes of physical oppression, violence and sexual exploitation practiced by white masters on slave women and mothers. As a black female writer, Jacobs tells her story under oppressive and tormenting circumstances in the slave's territory. This chapter depicts the real cruel incidents that happened in the southern plantations where enslaving and whipping innocent black people, women in particular, is permitted and legislated by law and religion. It tackles the theme of sexual abuse and racial prejudice towards slave women in addition to gender based treatment.

The third chapter explores the influence of religion and literacy on the life of a slave mother. It portrays how education and religion enlightened the minds of slave mothers and helped them overcome violence. In addition, it analyses the impact of sisterly bond on slave mother's life and her path to freedom. Sisterhood in the novel is depicted as an empowering link that strengthened oppressed slave mothers and helped them gain their freedom and that of their children. Religion and literacy are forms of resistance against the cruelty of white masters; it helped the main character to attain her freedom and that of her children.

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl portrays the journey of a slave mother from bondage to freedom; her refusal to exploitation and her long fight to prove that slave mothers deserve to feel humanity and motherly sensation. The autobiography concludes by overcoming violence and by giving voice to women under bondage. It, therefore,

raises awareness and sympathy in the hearts and minds of free women of the North so that they call for the end of slavery and racial segregation.

Chapter I: An Introduction to Slave Narratives

African American slave narratives are essential literary works to the study of the American History and literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They are first hand perspectives of former slaves who told the stories and experiences of fugitive slaves in the Northern states of America and mainly they denounced the violent and dreary realities of slavery and bondage in the United States.

Moreover, these narratives recount and reveal discrimination and cruelty of circumstances that motivated former slaves to run from slavery and bondage towards freedom in the North. As a literary genre, slave narratives form a very influential tradition of African American literature. It describes the history and culture of African Americans in the United States and forms a basis to their literature.

I.1.A Historical Context of Slavery in the United States of America

From a historical point of view, when the term “slavery” is ever mentioned, one should consider a whole history and community that draws the constraints, characteristics and dimensions of these shameful past events. The history of slavery tells a lot about its roots, crimes, and bloody incidents that wreck the dignity and pride of humanity.

Slavery existed in most parts of the world; its cruelties dominated the lives of slaves. However, in the United States matters were different because enslaving black Africans was emphasized mainly in the American soils. In fact, sources had differed in stating the early establishment of the slave institution in the United States, but they agreed that the first coming was by the beginning of the seventeenth century in the English province of Maryland “because it was the first province in English North America to recognize slavery as a matter of law” (Alpert 6). Both Indians and black Africans were brought to the province for working as life servants but it seemed that

Indians and Africans and even other European servants were treated differently and had different social class and status. Africans were considered inferior and uncivilized creatures which were the reason behind maltreating them (Alpert 5). Southern Americans looked for potent claims to keep the poor ignorant Black Africans as perpetual slaves and servants. As a result, they came up with the paganism notion which holds that “Non – Christian slaves were kept as slaves or perpetual servants” (Alpert 6).

Southern Americans tried diligently to keep Africans in the south using religion as a justification for their crimes. Consequently, slave owners established an act concerning the status of Negroes in the American soils. Alpert (7) explains

. . . . All Negroes or other slaves to be hereafter imported into the province shall serve Durante Vita (for life) And all children born of any Negro or other slave shall be slaves as their fathers were . . . all the issues of English or other free borne women that have already married Negroes shall serve the masters of their parents till they be thirty years of age and no longer.

The above 1664’s act declared that religion was not considered but was just an opinion used to justify enslaving Black Africans. In fact, the paganism theory passed through three stages. The first stage took place from 1634 to 1650. It affirmed that enslaving Africans was reduced because they had no trade contract with the province and were uncivilized, unlike European servants. The second stage lasted from 1650 to 1670 when the imported slaves were mostly civilized and christened. With The third stage, more emphasis was put on converting slaves to Christianity (Alpert 6-7).

Therefore, Alpert affirms that religion was a fake justification to preserve the institution of slavery because after the slaves of African descent were converted to Christianity,

fear of rebellion spread among the masters and the slaveholders. Christianity meant power and enlightenment to slaves; thus, the end of slave institution. Many disputes arose concerning this claim. Masters and colonists found it harmful that slaves become civilized; their civilization would bring an end to slavery and slaves would certainly call for emancipation. Therefore, it would harm Southern economy and welfare. It is true that slavery appeared throughout history a long time ago, but it was forced mainly in the United States. Hard labor was emphasized and inferior Africans were obliged to take the job.

Africans were denied of their basic rights, history, identity, knowledge and language. The first comers to the Southern States were called the indentured servants who worked in plantation for a precise period of time. However, for Black Africans, things were not the same. Servitude and slavery are not similar; slaves had more hard labor and total different treatments. Africans, unfortunately, worked with no contracts unlike the Indian and European servants whose contracts lasted from four to seven years. Negroes were oppressed, discriminated, and harshly treated (Alpert 3). Black slaves were objects to violence, oppression, and racism. In fact, slavery and racism go hand in hand. Whenever one refers to the enslavement of Black Africans, he should certainly relate it to racism and racial segregation. Racism and slavery are interrelated. They were both based on torturing poor labors and mainly used whippings and bloody torments to control their lives and behaviors. However, agony differed based on the kind of work slaves tackled and managed. For instance, there were slaves who worked as cooks, others who worked as home maids, others as guardians. Of course, wages and opportunities differed from one class of laborers to another.

Segregation started with the kind of labor African slaves were assigned to do. The way they were paid and compensated differed and varied. Alpert affirms that “This

variation in the treatment was “depending on the manner of Negro’s original sale or importation”(4). For him, it is deeply segregating and unfair that the African descent slaves were obliged to live and cope with unbearable conditions unlike the other servants of Indian and European races.

Throughout this horrible history of human bondage, former male and female African slaves challenged the iron chains and created a new genre of literature, “Slave Narratives”. Once in the Free States, they produced a new kind of literature that urged the importance of being free and literate. However, Becker says “Few females were able to narrate or publish their indictments of the twin brothers of oppression- slavery and sexism”.

I.2. Slave Narratives as a Literary Genre

Slave narratives is a literary form which represents the major events that are related to the life of former slaves. This genre of literature aims to tell and denounce all the whippings, murdering, burnings, raping, and breaking downs of the slave families. Ultimately, it transmits the yearning search for freedom and rejects the brutalities of the slave institution. Encyclopedia Britannica defines a slave narrative as “an account of the life, or a major portion of the life, of a fugitive or former slave, either written or orally related by the slave personally.” These pieces of writing were important ways to reveal the miseries of slavery. Later on, they were weaponry tools for the abolitionist movement that destructed the institution of slavery. These authentic documents were used to fight slavery and White Americans’ claim of authorizing bondage in the American soil.

Many authors have tackled the study of slave narratives’ genre of literature. David Brion Davis for instance states in Fisch’s that the emergence of this form of writing goes back to “the rise of secular social philosophy, based on the humanitarian

principles and contractual terms for human association and government found in such thinkers as Baron Montesquieu and John Locke, which drastically narrowed the traditional Christian rationale for slavery as the national extension of the slavery of human sin” (11). Brion sees that the institution of slavery has nothing to do with religion and Christianity. For him, slave narratives call for humanity and basic human rights’ approval unlike the justification of the human sin which claims that black Africans were created sinful and should be purified through the American enslavement.

The slave narrative is a purposeful text; it aims to end, first, the slave trade and second, to call for equal rights and freedoms to those blacks living under American racist bondage. Moreover, Gould approves that the “slave narrative is a transcultural formation of the international Black Atlantic” (11). Consequently, said Sinanan in her article entitled “The Slave Narrative and the Literature of Abolition” that “slave narratives were dynamic, responsive, hybrid writings that evolved within a range of diverse dialogues, debates, and arguments” (qtd. in Fisch 61). In more simple words, the slave narrative is a representation of a long lasting journey of individual slave or group of slaves from bondage to freedom passing through many regional districts and nations. It is also a recount of the wretchedness and sufferings of black men, women, and of children as well. In more simple words, slave narratives tell about the spiritual and physical journey of enslaved Africans who were displaced first from their homelands to be put in total different circumstances. Sinanan thinks that slave narratives can be analyzed from multiple perspectives; and can be regarded as political texts. They are seen as political texts because they put an end to the enslavement of innocent people. Also, they supported the abolition movement led by both white and former slaves. Slave narratives are the combination of the purposeful texts that bear in its corners the case of whole black discriminated community, “Slave narratives drew on multiple

discourses as a way of cultivating such complex identities that lay ambiguously within and without contemporary norms” (Fisch 11). This genre can be read as political texts that tackle the issue of slavery as a matter of law, and that are used as a way to end slavery and support the abolitionist movement. The slave narratives were considered authentic eyewitnesses to reveal the ferocity of enslavement that were told by former slaves themselves. Sinanan adds “The complex relationship between abolitionism and the slave narrative gave rise to a body of literature that exhibits the signs of exchange, argument, and debate” (qtd. in Fisch 62). For Sinanan, the slave narrative and the abolitionist movement aim to end slavery and give the voice to the enslaved community; ultimately, they aim to give a clear picture to the world and public about what slavery really is.

As a Northern American genre of literature; it is a writing that aims to make the world conscious about the reality and horrors of slavery. They are texts written to move readers so that they oppose and react against enslaving poor people, and treat them as humans not as chattels. On the other hand, slave narratives can be read as romantic stories because they tackle the issue of the slave families, relationships and family broken ties. To talk about family, it is traumatic and sorrowful for slaves to keep their family and relatives together. Slave writers tackle the themes of separation from parents, children, and lovers. In addition, these literary texts written by women slave writers focus on the maternal relations and the sexual exploitations imposed on the weak black female slaves.

The content and structure of slave narratives are totally different and distinct from other literary genres. They are texts written either by males or females aiming to address certain audience through expressing certain themes. The content of these texts differ. However, they share the same trigger and transmit the same common traumatic

faith and tearful feelings of men and women in bondage. Dickson D. Bruce, JR. states that “the slave narrative was intensely political documents. They all have many motivations behind their writings; all were published to play a role in the fight against slavery” (28). In other words, slave narratives have mainly a political motivation that shaped its form, purpose and content.

Generally, each writer is triggered by certain factors that inspire him to tackle certain issues. In the case of the slave narratives, they all have a common motive as discussed in the quote above. They all aim to discuss the theme of discovering ones identity and purchasing freedom in a state that proclaims democracy.

The common structure of the slave narrative starts by representing the early childhood of the slave protagonist and the conditions that surrounded his being. Then, it moves to describe and illustrate the precipitating events that pushed the slave protagonist and author to run away from the master’s cruelty. In the case of the work being discussed, Linda’s motive to flee away is to free her children and get rid of the sexual and psychological threat that she was obliged to face; she seeks love and care for herself and her children. “Autobiography may be understood as a recollective/narrative act in which the writer, from a certain point in his life-the present-, looks back over the events of that life and recounts them in such a way as to show how that past history has led to this present state of being”(Olney 47).

Olney adds that the autobiographer is an examiner of memory, he is not a passive narrator, but he is a creative and active shaper. It is in the interplay of past and present, of present memory reflecting over past experience on its way to becoming present being, that events are lifted out of time to be resituated not in mere chronological sequence but in patterned significance” (47). For Olney, the slave autobiographer examines what he experienced during enslavement. Olney describes

himself as an eyewitness who faithfully portrays the experiences of enslavement and the journey towards his or her autonomy. Then, he organizes the content of his narration and present it in a patterned manner that makes this genre of literature significant than the other genres of writings.

The narratives tell the readers about the spiritual and physical hardships and obstacles that were felt and experienced in the road to freedom. Besides, it depicts the way slaves, southerners, and northerners collaborated and worked together to end the violence imposed by slavery and human bondage. Finally, it ends by narrating the result of fleeing to the North and taking a new identity and aims to accord with the new social conditions.

Usually, a slave narrative opens with: "I was born..." to indicate that the slave asserts that he is a human being and he affirms that he is able to write his past life and story. For instance, Jacobs states "I was born a slave; but never knew it till the age of six years of happy childhood had passed away" (6); to indicate that she knows her birth and that she is as all children of her age and situation suffered the same atrocities and the sameness of fate. However, the time of birth is never mentioned. Another common phrase is "written by him/ herself" to illustrate the author's authenticity and reliability in addition to his education and literacy. Literacy for a slave is considered a powerful weapon that can be used in defeating cruelty and violence. Authenticity of the slave narratives is always questioned. The content and the particulars of the content were accused to be untruthful and fabricated. Weinstein in the article titled "The Slave Narrative and Sentimental Literature" argues that "supporters of slavery often questioned the authenticity of a slave narrative based on the extent to which it seemed more like a literary performance than a no-nonsense account of the facts" (118). Slave

narratives writers were accused of the manipulation of the facts and incidents in their stories.

A literate slave is a danger in the plantation and is considered as a plague for the slave owners that can affect the other slaves' minds and ultimately participates in ending the institution of slavery. Slaves do not have the right or the chance to be educated or to acknowledge their families and religion. This theme of literacy is discussed in the slave narrative and shapes the major part of this genre of writing. The story then is followed by an account of the parents, the cruel master and mistress, or overseers, details of whippings and being victimized. For Olney, the writer's job is "To give a true picture of slavery as it really is, he must maintain that he exercises a clear-glass, neutral memory that is neither creative nor faulty-indeed, if it were creative it would be eo ipso faulty for 'creative' would be understood by skeptical readers as a synonym for 'lying' " (48). The slave narratives give a clear account of the sexual, physical, and emotional abuse and trauma of the former slaves discussed in the text. It faithfully transmits the feelings and thoughts of the former slave that primarily seek the end of slavery and violence.

The slave narrative then moves to describe the bravery and courage committed by slaves to overcome violence and oppression practiced by their hypocrite masters. The slave narrative sheds light on the importance of education and literacy on the lives of slave. It affirms that literacy empowered the war and hopes of slaves to defeat the harassment and humiliation imposed by their persecutors. It tells about the life styles of slaves, their rituals, beliefs, customs, and most commonly their families. In general, slave narratives tell the life stories of former slaves in a linear structure from early childhood, adulthood, till they attain their freedom in the North.

Ultimately, it concludes by a poem, appeal to readers or moral supports to fight slavery. In addition to the possibility of a documentary material or a letter of credit or recommendations to the editor or publisher or all those who participated in accomplishing the work (Charles and Gates).

In general, men and women have faced the same violence and oppression during slavery. They both performed the same hard labor and they were both separated from their families as well as denied their basic human rights. Females, however, faced the continuous practice of sexual exploitation, harassment, and rape. Consequently, male and female slaves strived to break bondage, flee to the North and have a new life as normal human beings but the content of their literary production differs. Oppression, violence, abuse, denial of rights, and humiliation pushed the slave writers to specify the content of their narratives.

Men and women authors told their stories from different perspectives and styles though they share some characteristics as their thirst to be emancipated. In the article entitled “Battle of the Sexes: How Gender Influenced the Experience of Slavery”, writes Justine Phipps that “Throughout the abolition movement, slaves, both men and women, were making attempts to escape from the shackles of slavery”. Phipps adds “Although all slave autobiographies focused on the desire for and quest towards gaining freedom, the manner in which the stories were presented tended to vary between the sexes”. In this context, Phipps affirms that the difference between the male and female slave narratives varies in terms of content and style. Phipps continues “Women highlight the importance of family ties and emotions; men focus on self improvement”. In other words, the focus of slave narratives written by slave women is the themes of broken romance and families; they analyze the concepts of family as a major concern to their writings. As a consequence, Harriet Ann Jacobs’s

autobiography is to be considered and taken as case study to shed light on the major concerns of the female slave narratives to explain how these pieces of writings drew a path for enslaved women to overcome human bondage.

Women writers wrote about maternal love, motherhood, sexual oppression, and family bonds. Most of them witnessed their masters' sexual abuse and torture. Moreover, they testified their children being sold to different slave owners and overseers. Jacobs in her narratives states that all slave mothers faced discrimination and sexual oppression. Li Stephanie in "Motherhood as Resistance in Harriet Jacobs *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*" assures that in slavery "Many female slaves were unable to keep their families together, yet by emphasizing the oppositional action inspired by maternal sentiment Jacobs presents motherhood as a force that resists slavery and its supporters". However, their thirst for a unified and secured family triggered them to fight against rape and sexism.

Slave narratives written by women describe the strong bonds existing between slave mothers. They tackle the relationships between the victimized women and mothers who share the sense of sufferings and multiple oppressions in the slave plantations and their masters' houses. Mothers and their maternal experience are portrayed in the slave narratives as the victims who faced the sexual harassment and exploitation. In addition, they were torn from their families and children, and this forms the major concern of female slave narratives. Female slave writers write to raise the attention and sympathy of the northern audience and women about the shocking and disturbing realities of the denied motherhood and violence imposed on them in the enslaving communities.

Santamarina affirms in his article entitled "Black Womanhood in North American Women's Slave Narrative" that women slave writers had an aim behind their

writings; they, as men, had triggers for their autobiographies and they also experienced the same atrocities that men faced. Slave women were

...seeking to represent their experience for their audiences shared some of the problems slave men encountered when telling their stories. In an era in which citizenship was limited to white men, representations of the often humiliating experiences of slave men and women potentially exacerbated former slaves' vulnerability in their readers' eyes (qtd. in Fisch 232).

Women slave writers aim to fight slavery and oppression the same as men did. Women slave narratives are an important part of the American history and literature. They examine the different problems mainly related to motherhood, and sexual exploitation. They create a truthful scene about the continuous and daily exploitation slave women encountered. When writing their narratives, they purposefully reflect on the harsh conditions in which they were obliged to live or hide. Women slave writers address the negative effect of slavery on their lives and their families as well. The way they were tortured and exploited shaped the content of their works and the purpose as well.

The slave narrative usually portrays the theme of displacement which for the slave narrative writers impacted the major portion of their lives. When writing the narrative, the notion of displacement is examined. The writer tackles the experience of displacement and alienation of the former slave and tries to analyze its impact on the life and achievement of the character. Urszula Chowaniec said "The experience of displacement is one of alienation from language as well as of physical exclusion" (11). She believes that to be displaced means that the character in the work is alienated in terms of its maternal language and physically excluded as well. In *Incidents in the Life*

of a Slave Girl, the protagonist of the story is displaced for seven years in the dreary cell, and after running to the north, she is displaced and alienated in the new community in which she lost confidence and faces racial discrimination in many instants.

Chwaniec adds that alienation and exclusion result from the process of emigration and shape one's identity (11). Feeling excluded and alienated impacts the formation of identity and the self. It pushes the character to rethink and establish its position in the world because feeling rejected and alienated means feeling foreignness and loneliness which would influence one's thinking and beliefs (12). Das writes that "African Americans were first brought to America as slaves and in this process they were displaced from their land and cultures" (83). Respectively, the feeling of displacement was first experienced by the African Americans when they were displaced and transported from their homeland and put in a new different and segregating culture and space. In this process of displacement, "The African Americans in their passage through slavery had to struggle to establish a sense of identity, to find a voice, and to claim a political and cultural space in the United States of America"(83). In other words, when the African American is transported and placed in a new soil, he loses his being; he loses his name and the claim of citizenship. The loss of identity is the ultimate threat that the displaced African American encounters. Das again affirms that African Americans brought to the New World lost their identity because of alienation and displacement which negatively affect their practice of their maternal culture and rituals. Therefore, their identity and expression of the self is disturbed by the new imposed boundaries. Displacement was imposed on Negroes when they were placed in different soils and alienation. In more simple words, "the Negro, not only lost his culture but his very personal name. He was either given a Christian name or the surname of his master so that he could be easily identified that, he belonged to a particular master. The Negro,

in this process lost his very personal indication of identity”(83). Slavery was harder for psychologies than for bodies of black Africans; it erased their beings and silenced their voices. Identity for negroes was very hard to be protected.

The slave narrative in this respect came to call for identity and self definition. Fighting discrimination and segregation through the slave narratives claim at the same time for the self emancipation and identity approval. Slave narrative writers do not only call for freedom but also for self determination.

Major slave narratives writers emerged to call for these claims, identity and freedom. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many male and female slave narratives writers came to scenes. More famously are Frederick Douglass, Harriet Ann Jacobs, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Nat Turner. These writers produced very influential literary works that played a major impact on the life of the other slaves and African American communities, history, culture, and identity. They narrated their personal experiences in slavery and throughout their struggle against the cruelty of the institutional slavery. Furthermore, they aimed mainly to use their narratives to attain their stolen freedom and civil rights among the white Americans.

In the autobiography of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, written by Himself*, Frederick Douglass the autobiographer writes about his experience in slavery, his mental and physical struggle, and his fight to emancipate himself from the chains of bondage. In his narratives, Douglass narrates his rebellion against his cruelty and brutal whipping. He highlights his yearning for faithful Christianity and his thirst for education as an empowering tool to break human bondage and achieve his yearning freedom (Sparknotes.com). Nicole Smith writes in his article “Analysis and Review of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*” that “A few of which include inequality, education and an urban environment as the keys to freedom, as well

as the duality of Christianity in terms of its true values within the institution of slavery are the three themes that are present in the autobiography of Frederick Douglass”

“Analysis and Review of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*”.

In her anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Life among the Lowly*, Harriet Beecher Stowe (1852) depicts the life of Uncle Tom from slavery to freedom, though slavery's violence and tortures end the life of poor Uncle Tom before he is emancipated. “Stowe was an active abolitionist and the book became a symbol of the power of literature in social reform.” (Super Summary.com). Uncle Tom is a slave in the Shelby's plantation; he lives comfortable with his little family until his master decides to sell him because of debts. Uncle Tom is sold to another kind family who recognizes that slavery is a wrong and injustice that should be prohibited.

Unfortunately, Uncle Tom's new master dies in an accident and Tom eventually is sold to a harsh and cruel master who uses slaves to accomplish his hard labor without wages or care. Like all the slaves, Uncle Tom is whipped and dies few days after (Super Summary.com).

The Confession of Nat Turner is a novel written by the American author William Styron that was first published in 1967. Nat Turner was a historical figure who had rebelled and rejected enslavement and violence and who arranged riots against white slaveholders in the Southern soils to prove that enslaving innocents is a wrongdoing. In this fictionalized work, Styron based his writing on the themes of race, revolution, freedom, morality, and justice expressed in the confessions of Nat Turner that were published by a local lawyer, Thomas Ruffin (Super Summary.com).

“When the confession of Nat Turner first appeared, it was acclaimed as breakthrough both in fiction and in race relations” (eNotes.com). When in the south, Turner revolted against slavery in his region and organized a rebellion that caused the

death of a considerable number of white southerners. Turner presented the bravery of the African individual and the refusal to human enslavement and torture (eNotes.com).

As a literary genre, slave narratives are committed to be purposeful texts that aim to end slavery and to call for African American freedom and emancipation. The role of the slave narratives and slave autobiographers is purposeful. It supported the abolitionist movement and defeated partially or totally racism and human segregation in the United States. Slave narratives gave rise to African American independent culture, beliefs, and thinking. Thus, they were crucial in constructing the identities of African Americans and helped them in attaining their violated self and determination. For the case of female slave narratives, they highlight the long journey towards freedom through rejecting the harsh discriminating violent experiences under the slave system and law.

Chapter II: Oppression and Family Broken Ties in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

The life of a slave girl is full of horrors. Unlike the normal free white girl, her life is exposed to sadness, broken heart and diminishing hopes. Many atrocities happen in her life. In the early years of her childhood, Jacobs states that she never knew that she is a slave till the death of her mistress and both parents. Since then, sorrows started to dominate the life of little Jacobs. Fear and tears filled her days, and doubts about her future arose when she got older.

Throughout the whole novel, Jacobs portrays the theme of broken family and oppressed motherhood. She depicts the stories of many slave mothers who were torn away from their children and most of them failed to bring them back. The racist and violent masters and mistresses turned the lives of slave girls and women dreary and brutal. Jacobs then narrated how she, unlike the other slave girls and mothers, defeated the physical and psychological oppression, and fought her master's cruelty to defend her family and feel their love, and experience the mother's affection.

II.1. An Introduction to the Author and her Work

Harriet Ann Jacobs was born in 1813 Edenton, North Carolina and died in March 7, 1897, Washington, D.C. Jacobs is referred to as an abolitionist and autobiographer who wrote about her experiences in slavery to denounce the cruelties and harshness of the southern states (Britannica.com). As a slave narrative writer, Jacobs explains that she changed the names of her mother Delilah and her father Elijah Jacobs. As the daughter of a slave, she has been exposed to the hardships of slavery in the early times of her childhood. However, Jacobs did not know that her life was not her own nor of her parents' till the age of six years old when both her mother and father died. Jacobs is sheltered by Mrs. Margaret Horniblow who taught her to read and write and depend on herself unlike many other slave children who lived in ignorance and

misery. Unfortunately, Margaret dies and in her death bed, she wills Jacobs to her niece and her physician husband (Zafar 2-3).

After years of resistance, she had a relation with a white lawyer, Samuel Tredwell Sawyer with whom she gave birth to her son Joseph in 1829 and her daughter, Louisa in 1833. Unfortunately she was sent to a plantation far from her grandmother and family. Jacobs decides to hide for seven years, eventually she runs to the North in 1842, frees her children and purchases her autonomy, and keeps working for the Willis family who provided her with support and protection. In 1861, she publishes her autobiography discussing the sexual harassment and terrifying anguish slave mothers faced. Her literary production was not authenticated until 1981, after being rediscovered due to the declaration of the civil rights in 1960s (Britannica, Inc.).

In 1862, Jacobs moved to Washington D.C and volunteered in the freedmen's relief under the Quakers. In this movement, she passed supplies and food to the poor blacks who run from slavery and war. She then went to Savannah, Georgia and to England. When the reconstruction of the South accomplished, she and her daughter went back to the North and established a boarding house for Harvard faculty and students. In 1897, Jacobs died and buried at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, and her stone reads "Patient in tribulation, fervent in spirit serving the Lord."(gradesaver.com).

The autobiography opens with an introduction in which Harriet Ann Jacobs describes the reason behind writing her story and why she changed the names in order to protect those people who cared about her. Jacobs uses the pseudonym of Linda Brent to narrate her story. This autobiography begins with Linda Brent describing her happy childhood with her parents and brother. After her mother died, Linda is sent to her mother's mistress' house who teaches her to read and write.

Shortly, afterwards, her mistress dies and wills her to her niece who is also still a child. The niece's father Dr. Flint was cruelly trying to abuse Linda sexually; therefore she escapes by having a relation with Mr. Sands and gives birth to two children, Ellen and Benny. However, Dr. Flint got enraged and decides to take the children away from Linda. When Linda knew that Dr. Flint is going to take her children to the plantation to work as slaves, she planned to rescue them by running the degradation of enslavement and asked Mr. Sands to buy her children's freedom. Mr. Sands succeeds in buying his children's freedom but Linda was obliged to live seven years hiding in a small place so that she can join her children in the North and mislead Dr. Flint who in turns thinks she has been in New York.

With the help of her grandmother, Aunt Martha, her uncle Philip, Aunt Nancy and many other slaves, friends and family members in addition to some Northern white gentlemen and women, Linda follows successfully her children; she was supported by her relatives and finally buys her freedom. Ultimately, she is reunified with Ellen and Benny and lived together happy with no more of violence and discrimination. Though she is free, she reflects on slavery claiming that she feels ashamed of knowing that she bought her freedom in the country that declares it to its entire people.

II.2. Physical and Sexual Oppression in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl is a story that depicts the journey of a slave girl from childhood and innocence to the period when she becomes a mother who faced physical and psychological traumas that dreaded her life and that of people around her. Women under slavery were highly exploited, Patricia Collins explains "Thus, one core theme in U.S. Black feminist thought consists of analyzing Black women's labor market victimization as 'mules'. As dehumanized objects, mules are living machines and can be treated as part of the scenery. Fully human women are less easily

exploited”(45). In general, a slave girl needs more protection and care in the slave plantation. She is always in danger of rape and sexual exploitation. White masters are always regarding slave women as sexual tools that satisfy their hunger for sexual selfish desires. Jacobs explains that in her early years she did not know that she is a slave neither she felt the sorrows of being inferior; but when her parents and first mistress died, things changed and the evil eyes of her master started to chase her innocent body. At that period of her life, Jacobs started to be treated according to her gender, race, and her class basis. As a Black female, she was threatened to be physically and sexually exploited. The color of the skin put Jacobs in the column of racism and sexual segregation. Mathews affirms that “Her tale of sexually aggressive masters, harried, choices and the sacrifices of a loving mother illuminate the moral and spiritual degradation caused by the ‘peculiar institution’ of slavery” (1). Moreover, being the daughter of enslaved parents necessarily means that she would face the same destiny as her parents had; in other words, to live and die under the chains of slavery.

Jacobs explains how the brutal force of slavery imposed fear and doubts in her life. Jacobs always faced the degradation of being a slave. Her master and mistress expressed a deep hatred and hypocrisy when dealt with Jacobs; she always suffered their abuse and monstrous and wicked ambitions. She, therefore, writes her story to raise awareness of people of the North about the violent crimes in the South. Jacobs asks “In view of these things, why are ye silent, ye free men and women of the north? Why do your tongues falter in maintenance of the right? Would that I had more ability! But my heart is so full, and my pen is so weak!” (29). Jacobs delivers her story to call for sympathy of the free people and raise their awareness about the degradation and meanness of slavery. Her story is an account of her experiences in slavery that primarily aim to criticize all bad offences imposed on her and on her sisters in

bondage. In this context, Kabria Baumgartner adds “Incidents is thus not only an account of the experiences she endured as an enslaved African American woman, but also, in light of her public activities as an educator and abolitionist; a text intended to enlighten white Northern women on why and how American slavery should be abolished” (53). For Baumgartner, Jacobs does not only write to raise empathy, but also to reveal how degrading the slavery institution and masters are.

Slavery is too bad for men but it is much worse for women. Black females suffered the two sides of oppression, racism and sexism. In the southern soil, a black girl is seen as a sexual property that is easily used to prosper the offspring of the master and with that his ownership enlarges in terms of labors and productions. Collins writes that “Under slavery, U.S. Black women worked without pay in the allegedly public sphere of southern agriculture and had their family routinely violated” (47). Jacobs believes that this patriarchal and gender based system forces the southern slave woman to feel the degradation in the word slavery. If the Northern people knew about it they would certainly put an end to its brutality and join the fight that southern Black ladies started. She explains “Northerners know nothing at all about slavery. They think it is perpetual bondage only. They have no conception of the depth of degradation_ involved in that word, SLAVERY; if they had, they would never cease their efforts until so horrible system was overthrown”(1). For Jacobs, there is no human heart on earth that can sustain the brutality of such a terrible system. Slavery treated women harder than it did with men. It is true that men were harshly abused, but women were doubly used. They were first humiliated because of their race, the black race. And secondly, they were degraded because of their gender. Women in bondage were seen inferior creatures; they were physically and spiritually hurt by their white masters and

mistresses. Their lives were open to huge amounts of whippings, torturing, hunger, thirst, murdering, and rape.

Violence had been portrayed repeatedly in slave narratives as a recurrent feature of Africans' lives under slavery. Jacobs in her autobiography described how she suffers her masters' and mistress' abuse, assault, and perpetual injuries. Jacobs continues

My grandmother had taken my old shoes and replaced them with a new pair. I needed them; for several inches of snow had fallen, and it still continued to fall. When, I walked through Mrs. Flint's room, their creaking grated harshly on her refined nerves. She called me to her, and asked what I had about me that made such horrid noise. I told her it was my new shoes. 'Take them off', said she; 'and if you put them on a gain, I'll throw them into the fire(19).

When Jacobs was a child, her mistress Mrs. Flint had taken her new shoes because they made some noise when she walked and obliged her to walk without them on the snow. In the morning Jacobs got sick and was obliged to stay in bed for the whole day. At that moment, Jacobs wished to die to get rid of this horrible discrimination and harshness. She writes "That night I was very hoarse; and I went to bed thinking the next day would find me sick, perhaps dead. What was my grief on waking to find myself quite well!"(19).

Violence is exercised on Jacobs by her master and mistress because of her weakness and inferiority. Jacobs expresses that physical and verbal violence occurred simultaneously with psychological and spiritual anguish, isolation, and deprivation. When Jacobs is treated violently either by her master or mistress she feels inferior, weak, and lonely. Death is the first wish for Jacobs in her isolation; she thinks that

dying is more merciful than living under the control of a vicious master and jealous cold blooded mistress.

Violence caused Jacobs to feel hatred towards her master and antagonists who sought to break her innocence and happy moments of her life. She writes “For my master, whose restless, craving, vicious nature roved about day and night, seeking whom to devour, had just left me , stinging, scorching words; words that scathed ear and brain like fire” (17). Jacobs’s master addresses her with abusing dirty words that seeks to manipulate her mind to accept his desires to trick her and have sexual relation with her. Jacobs is disgusted by her master dirtiness. His wrong doings caused her sorrow and fear. Jacobs considered her master as a cruel monster who harmed her physically and spiritually. Dr. Flint has always been a source of terror and panic to Jacobs who did not only faced physical torment but also verbal curses and insults. “Don't you stir a step, you little wretch!" said he. The child drew nearer to me, and put his arms round me, as if he wanted to protect me. This was too much for my enraged master. He caught him up and hurled him across the room. I thought he was dead, and rushed towards him to take him up”(76). In this incident, Dr. Flint came to visit Jacobs in her grandmother’s house threatening her that she will not succeed in buying her freedom. He accused her of sending a slaveholder who offered him a considerable price to buy her. Dr. Flint got enraged and threw her boy, Ben, away. That was a scene which strongly frightened Jacobs the poor weak slave mother who could not defeat herself neither her little boy from the insults and harm of the cruel monstrous master.

She adds “When he told me that I was made for his use, made to obey his command in_ every_ thing; that I was nothing but a slave, whose will must and should surrender to his, never before had my puny arm felt half so strong”(17). Mr. Flint thought Jacobs to be weak and lonely that she would believe his dirty words and

promises. He sought to abuse her body for his selfish desires and to manipulate her innocent mind to follow his terms and submit to his wicked wishes. He continuously promised Jacobs to provide all luxuries to comfort her only if she accepts his commands and follow his words.

With that, Jacobs assures that this period in her life brings fear of abuse and exploitation; she is no longer a child and her master now sees her as a sexual object that would satisfy his vicious, greedy, and dirty wants. He told her dirty and corrupted thoughts and words; he promised her to build a cottage for her only to stay away of the scenes of his wife. Jacobs explains

But I now entered on my fifteenth year—a sad epoch in the life of a slave girl. My master began to whisper foul words in my ear. Young as I was, I could not remain ignorant of their import. I tried to treat them with indifference or contempt. The master's age, my extreme youth, and the fear that his conduct would be reported to my grandmother, made him bear this treatment for many months(27).

In her words, Jacobs expresses that with becoming older, her master started to tell her corrupted words and send her malicious letters to trick her thoughts and break her principles and self pride. Jacobs is disgusted by his conduct that he might defeat her and frustrate her desire to break free. She had no place to hide in and can tell nobody of the dangers she is confronting. She is scared that she would harm many people and bring problem to her relatives if they know about the facts in Flint's house. Sometimes, Jacobs was humiliated in front of her brother William who, as a young lad, could do nothing to save his sister from the hands of Dr. Flint. The weakness of her brother was very painful for Jacobs who felt too sorrowful for the incidents. Mianconfirms “ This debased treatment, Jacobs explains, stems from the intrinsic imbalance of power

between the slave owner and the female slave. Jacobs cites numerous examples of Dr. Flint's behavior as proof of the all-corrupting power of slavery and its detrimental effects on the maternal experience" (10). A slave woman, for Jacobs, is lonely in her war; relatives are weak in the face of white master as depicted in her story. She is lonely in her master's hands; no one could protect her from him neither from the jealous cruel mistress who in day and night suspects Jacobs of having a relation with the old hypocrite doctor.

Jacobs was not the only victim in the power of white masters. She, like other bondswomen in the South, faced the sexual threat, but she refused to surrender to her master's demands. Instead, she defeated his insults and menace and resisted against his will by having a relation with another white and unmarried man. Jacobs found release in Mr. Sands' gentle words and intentions; unlike Dr. Flint, he respected Jacobs and comforted her from misery. Jacobs was sure that Mr. Sands would not treat her like the other enslaved women; she thought she should not give birth to children who would be denied and treated as chattels. If she submitted to the demands of the old doctor, her life would end in total and perpetual misery and wretchedness. However, by choosing Mr. Sands as a savior, she therefore, broke the arrogance and malevolence of her cruel master. Ultimately, she gave birth to Benjamin and Ellen and avoided degradation that awaited for her little children. She affirms

Though this bad institution deadens the moral sense, even in white women, to a fearful extent, it is not altogether extinct. I have heard southern ladies say of Mr. such a one, "He not only thinks it no disgrace to be the father of those little niggers, but he is not ashamed to call himself their master. I declare, such things ought not to be tolerated in any decent society!" (35).

Jacobs's situation was not different from other enslaved females. She also suffered the same oppression and sexual abuse by her master. She knew that she would face the same destiny like that of other Negro girls of her race and feared she would not be able to defend her rights as a human being. Violence was practiced on Jacobs, during girlhood and motherhood as well. In this respect, Jacobs adds

When Dr. Flint learned that I was again to be a mother, he was exasperated beyond measures. He rushed from the house, and returned with a pair of shears. I had a fine head of hair; and he often railed about my pride of arranging it nicely. He cut every hair close to my head, storming and swearing all the time. I replied to some of his abuse, and he struck me. Some months before, he had pitched me down stairs in a fit of passion; and the injury I received was so serious that I was unable to turn myself in bed for many days.

When Linda gave birth to her son Benjamin, Dr. Flint was enraged and with the second birth he got more anger and envy on Linda who refused to submit to his dirty wills. She, like the other women, was maltreated and harshly abused; she believed that she would be a mother of the weak slaves who are going to serve the master and mistress, and who are going to be sold to different purchasers in the states far of her sight regardless of what mother's heart would feel. Linda went through a lot of difficulties and obstacles. When talking about the physical torment, Linda in her quote explains how her master harmed her by cutting her hair which she loves and kindly takes care of it only because she resisted against his insults and curses. Moreover, beating her violently caused her physical injuries that prevented her from leaving the bed for many days. Dr. Flint violent behaviors did not only cause physical, but psychological also. She, therefore, "explored such themes as the horrors of sexual

abuses by her master, the bond with her grandmother, and her love for her children”(Okajima 235). Linda also writes “Could you have seen that mother clinging to her child, when they fastened the irons upon his wrists, could you have heard her heart-rending groans, and seen her bloodshed eyes wander widely from face to face, vainly pleading for mercy; could you have witnessed that scene as I saw it, you would exclaim_ slavery is damnable!” (13). When Lina’s uncle, Benjamin, was taken to jail, his mother, Aunt Martha felt broken hearted and sorrowed about the incidents. Jacobs witnessed how her grandmother felt oppressed and doubtful about what was going to happen to her dear son. She saw and felt how her grandmother was broken hearted when her son was taken away and tortured in jail. It was very hard for both of them to bear the sadness and pain of broken motherhood.

Later on when Jacobs became a mother, this feeling of soreness made Jacobs frightened that she might experience the same trauma, and loses her children the same as her grandmother did. She thought that her life and that of her child would be dreadful and painful the same as the rest of slave mothers and children. Jacobs (35) justifies:

Southern women often marry a man knowing that he is the father of many little slaves. They do not trouble themselves about it. They regard such children as property, as marketable as the pigs on the plantation; and it is seldom that they do not make them aware of this by passing them into the slave-trader's hands as soon as possible, and thus getting them out of their sight.

As quoted above, a slave mother and her children’s lives are always open to disillusionment and frustrations. White masters and mistresses do not care about a slave mother or slave children, they do not care if they eat, clothe or sleep, what they care about is if the work inside home and outside it is completed. The life of a slave girl is

an object to violence and abuse, physical and psychological. Jacobs (18) quotes “I had not lived fourteen years in slavery for nothing. I had felt, seen, and heard enough, to read the characters, and question the motives of those around. The war of my life had begun; and though one of God’s most powerless creatures, I resolved never to be conquered”. Jacobs chose to challenge; she has resisted against the will and demands of her master. She always felt the humiliation of slavery, thus she was ready to defeat and terminate all psychological and sexual harassment imposed on her in addition to the unbearable cruelty of master and mistress. In fact being a slave is a nightmare, a slave girl is not protected by law neither by religion and relatives. It is seldom that a slave finds refuge in the warmth of family. In other words, a slave girl is wanted to fulfill her masters’ desires.

A bondswoman is obliged to accept all violent actions and words “No matter whether the slave girl be as black as ebony or as fair as her mistress. In either case, there is no shadow of law to protect her from insult, from violence or even from death; all these are inflicted by fiends who bear the shape of men” (27). A slave woman is a sexual object to the Southern master; she should bear the spiteful intentions and villainous eye looks of those who owe her freedom. “She listens to violent outbreaks of jealous passion, and cannot help understanding what the cause is. She will become prematurely knowing in evil things. Soon she will learn to tremble when she hears her masters’ footfall” (28). The monstrous threats of master and mistress were ordeal to Jacobs’s life; a reason to resist and a source of power to break free and end her enslavement.

A slave girl cannot hide and cannot protect her purity from her villain master. Although Jacobs’s grandmother provided her with advice and noble principles to preserve her dignity, their influence was little and Jacobs decided to resist and refuse

the evils of slavery in order to protect those principles. She could no longer ask her grandmother's protection, she was then threatened by her master not to tell what she witnesses or hears in that accursed house. "I longed for someone to confide in. I would to have laid my head on my grandmother's faithful bosom, and told her all my troubles. But Dr. Flint swore he would kill me, if I was as silent as the grave" (28). Jacobs had lived and passed long nights of uncertainty and hatred under one roof with her antagonist who threatened to kill her if she had not kept silent and had not accepted his advances. Patricia Collins adds "In a context of virulent racism, public disclosure could leave Black men and women vulnerable to increased sexual violence at the hands of white men" (125).

Linda adds that she not only faced horrors caused by her evil master, but her mistress also caused her terrors and serious threat to her life. When Dr. Flint started to treat Jacobs as desired woman, his wife Mrs. Flint suspected that there was a relation between the two. For this reason, she begun to spy on Jacobs and caused her some troubles to make her situation harder. Jacobs says

At other times, she whispered in my ear, as though it was her husband who was speaking to me, and listened to hear what I would answer. If she startled me, on such occasions, she would glide stealthily away; and the next morning she would tell me I had been talking in my sleep, and ask who I was talking to. At last, I began to be fearful for my life (33).

As quoted above, Linda had simultaneously faced the harassment and threats imposed and exercised by Mrs. Flint who never faced her husband of his malice wrong doings with Linda; she knows well that her husband is not the only white man who seeks to exploit one of his slaves. Instead, she turns Linda's life into a pit. As a victim, Linda did not only experience doubts and

unknown future, but she was also obliged to experience the threats of a jealous mistress. Physical and psychological oppression were imposed on Linda and other women in the southern plantation. Linda had undergone continuous ultimatums of maltreatments and heartbreaks; she, however, resisted and refused all kinds of agony.

II.3. Slaves' Family Broken Ties

Family in slaves' lives is very important. In fact, slaves underwent very painful and harrowing experiences. Family was crucial in maintaining their solidarity and unity. They needed to be united and harmonized under the name of family. The slaves' families were broken and destructed. The reason behind the breaking down of the slave's family was to abuse and violate those poor people's rights. These weak creatures had been always a source of labor and pleasure. Collins assures "In contrast, the majority of African Americans were enslaved. They had great difficulty maintaining families and family privacy in public spheres that granted them no citizenship rights" (49). Bondswomen were regarded as sinful breathing machines who were separated from their children and relatives. Linda narrates that when she was a child, it happened that her father called on her little brother William who was sent for by his mistress. Linda says that at that moment, William responded his mistress and went to her immediately. When his father asked him why he did so, he replied that his mistress called first and he ought to go to her. Moreover, she describes that a lot of slave women could not be protected by their husbands. Most of the time, husbands were obliged to see their wives taken by white masters without being able to protect them or resist against the evil of their monstrous masters. She adds "some poor creatures have been so brutalized by the lash that they will sneak out of the way to give their masters access to their wives and daughters" (42). Slavery was very harsh with its

laborers. In addition to the physical and sexual violence they were experiencing, their families were broken and relationships were destructed under the name of purifying the system.

The most recurring theme in the slave narratives is motherhood, a theme that Jacobs perfectly portrayed through her story and narration. From the beginning of her narrative, she describes the lives the lives of many mothers who also witnessed the violent crimes of white masters and slaveholders. *Incidents* depicts the life of Jacobs herself, a slave mother who dared to fight enslavement and tortures of the system and protected her children. She triumphed in overcoming violence and sexual tortures and gained her children's freedom at the end. Okajima writes "In other words, it is her motherhood that becomes her mental support during the slavery and ultimately leads her and her children to freedom" (236).

Linda represents the model of the brave mother who, unlike the other slave mothers in the story, rejected humiliation and drew a new path to freedom for her and for her children. Jacobs refused the idea of being separated from her family, she worked hard and kept her family members together. In the story, Jacobs portrays the lives of many slave mothers who witnessed their children taken away from them in the name of justice and hypocrite humanity. However, she also talks about other slave mothers who did not accept watching their family members and children tortured and preferred to defend them and call for their rights as human beings. More precisely, she depicts the life story of her grandmother who from the beginning of the novel tries to keep the link between the members of the family. "When she saw the doctor treat me with violence, and heard him utter oaths terrible enough to palsy a man's tongue, she could not always hold her peace. It was natural and mother like that she should try to defend me"(73). Motherhood has been the core theme of the slave narrative. It sheds light on the

suffering mothers experienced for the sake of keeping their children near to them.

Mothers were the fighters for their fatherless children's rights and emancipation. They paid money and efforts to stand in the face of brutal slavery.

Slavery had stolen every beautiful thing in the life of a slave girl. It pushed the wretched mother to wish death for her and for her children and so that they would not face the same foul play actions. Jacobs (72) explains "I knew the law gave him power to fulfill it; for slaveholders have been cunning enough to enact that 'the child shall follow the condition of the _mother_, ' not of the _father_, thus taking care that licentiousness shall not interfere with avarice." When Jacobs knew that her children are to follow her condition, being a slave as she was, her heart was filled with sorrow and fright. She no longer confides the hidden coming incidents. she was continuously endangered by selling her children and sending them to the auction block to receive the same destiny as other slaves.

Slavery was harsh for mothers and children more than for men. When she remembered that her children would be one day sold to slaveholders for other states, horrible thoughts came to her mind; she could not be sure that if they were sold, they would be put in merciful hands. A slave mother's heart was always watchful and worried. She (72) points "This reflection made me clasp my innocent babe all the more firmly to my heart. Horrid visions passed through my mind when I thought of his liability to fall into the slave trader's hands." In each occasion, Dr. Flint reminds Jacobs that he owes the keys of her freedom and if she did not accept his ferocious offers, he would sell her children and take them away. This imposed some internal fear and depression. A slave mother always feels anxious about the life of her enslaved children; they are obliged to live under the same barbaric deeds of the white masters who consider slaves as inferior living things. In the narrative, Dr. Flint thinks that if he sells

Jacobs's children and set them apart from her, he will break her pride and hopes of being free and reaching the North. He hurts her feelings and instills frustration in her heart. Jacobs writes "Dr. Flint continued his visits, to look after my health, and he did not fail to remind me that my child was an addition to his stock of slaves" (58). His words added more panic to Jacobs's heart; she now thinks to undertake her fight against the cruelty of her master for the sake of protecting her children. For the slave mother, her dream is to see her children happy and secure. The smiles and happy looks in the face of her children were trigger for her to oppose and withstand against the torturing system of slavery. She writes "When I was most sorely oppressed I found a solace in his smiles. I loved to watch his infant slumbers; but always there was a dark cloud over my enjoyment" (72). Jacobs expresses how she loves to play with her child and spend time with him; Jacobs's happy moments with her little son were uncertain. Whenever she smiles and plays with him, the dark cloud of misery and sadness breaks her joyful moments. Okajima adds "Brent repeatedly shows her motherly love to her children. Although she cannot talk to them, she can hear them talk and see them play outside the small holes that she bored with gimlet" (239). Unlike the ordinary free mother, the slave mother always feels distressed and worried about the unknown future of her and of her children; she always expects the worst to happen. In the enslaving Southern States, the hands of violence and oppression are much stronger than that of passionate mother's heart.

After she gave birth to a second child, Ellen, Jacobs thinks that her children should not face the same intolerable actions. She explains "When they told me my newborn babe was a girl, my heart was heavier than it had ever been before. Slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women. Superadded to the burden common to all, _they_ have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their

own” (73). Jacobs gave birth to Ellen, a new slave girl in the story who may encounter the same exploit as her mother did. For Jacobs there is a difference between the lives of slave men and women; she believes that the lives of bondswomen are much drearier and harder than that of men. Enslaved women meet physical, sexual and psychological oppression which brutalize and deaden them. Jacobs adds “She clasped a gold chain round my baby's neck. I thanked her for this kindness; but I did not like the emblem. I wanted no chain to be fastened on my daughter, not even if its links were of gold. How earnestly I prayed that she might never feel the weight of slavery's chain, whose iron entereth into the soul!”(74). Jacobs had suffered slavery; she witnessed a very long days and nights of fear and insurrection. She no longer wants to see chains on her body or on that of her little girl; she refuses her daughter to be cursed and humiliated by her master or the harsh situation of being wretched slave woman.

Jacobs, in her story, explains how she longs for an ordinary life for her children, when she was sheltered in her grandmother’s house, she dreams of freedom for her and for her children. She believes that she should never cease her hopes of being free, she says “I was dreaming of freedom again; more for my children's sake than my own. I planned and I planned. Obstacles hit against plans. There seemed no way of overcoming them; and yet I hoped” (77). Jacobs no longer cares about herself; she, now, thinks about the fate of her children. She puts plans and tries them continuously without losing hope or being distressed by the wrongdoings of her master and mistress. She longs to see her children free and she strived strongly for that purpose.

The bad circumstances and doctor’s Flint’s perils of getting her children away and treating them violently the same as the other slaves worried her thoughts, she confirms “‘Very well. Go to the plantation, and my curse go with you,’ he replied. ‘Your boy shall be put to work, and he shall soon be sold; and your girl shall be raised

for the purpose of selling well. Go your own ways!’ He left the room with curses, not to be repeated” (80). Dr. Flint proposes that he is to build a cottage for Jacobs and her children to live in and to be under his observation. However, Jacobs refuses his offer immediately. If she accepted, he would treat her as a mean slave woman and would torture her innocent body similar to the other slave women. At that moment he frightens Jacobs to send her along with her children to her young master plantation to work there, and her children should be treated the same as the other Negro children. The doctor intends to separate Jacobs from her children to weaken her hopes because he considers them the reason behind her powerful beliefs.

Linda believes that above the law of slavery and her master’s will of breaking her family down, her love for her children provided her with help; her desire for freedom and for her children is believed to be powerful than the dream of her master would be. She assures

My grandmother was much cast down. I had my secret hopes; but I must fight my battle alone. I had a woman's pride, and a mother's love for my children; and I resolved that out of the darkness of this hour a brighter dawn should rise for them. My master had power and law on his side; I had a determined will. There is might in each(80).

Linda protests against the determination of her master to keep her and her children in bondage. She knows that her antagonist is powerful and law is in his side but this did not weaken her hopes and inclinations that she is able to maintain the unity and safety of her family. She is convinced that motherhood and tenderness are not less powerful than violence exercised by her malicious master and the strong ties of slaves’ family can overcome and raise above the cruelty of slave master and law, the same as Jacobs did. She freed her little dear children and destroyed the selfish desire of her

master. Jacobs concludes “Every trial I endured, every sacrifice I made for their sakes, drew them closer to my heart, and gave me fresh courage to beat back the dark waves that rolled and rolled over me in a seemingly endless night of storms” (84). Jacobs sacrifices to keep her family safe; every effort she did was for the sake of protecting her children from destruction and binding enslavement.

She, ultimately, decides to flee, to leave her children alone, leave her family and looks for a way to secure their lives. She prefers to hide and leave her grandmother’s house to protect her children from being taken to work and live in the plantation. She plans and ultimately she is displaced from her community and family. Jacobs hides in one friend’s house. She loved Aunt Martha and her grandchildren and promised to help Jacobs in her war against slavery and her vicious old hypocrite master. She provided shelter and protection for Jacobs when darker days came. When Dr. Flint came to her house, he pleaded her for a loan, an amount of money to travel to the North seeking the steps of Linda. The old friend participated in the plan and misled Flint also; she gave him the money and comforted the frightened Jacobs in her hiding room.

When Jacobs was suspected to be placed in the old friend house, new arrangement were planned for her. A new hiding place was prepared for her in her own grandmother’s house, a crawling cell; a very small and darkened place for her. Jacobs sacrificed all she had. She was convinced that there was no other solution better than hiding in her grandmother’s house, a place that Dr. Flint would never suspect. Linda hides for seven years. Dreary as they were, she spent each day watching her children growing up missing the bosom and tenderness of their absent mother. When Jacobs was hiding in her loophole, she missed her children, their smiles, kisses, hugs, and worm little hands. This incident, in fact, had a very sorrowful effect on Jacobs’s life; her nostalgia to be placed with her children harmed her physically and spiritually. It was

very hard for her to observe her children growing up without a mother and father.

Jacobs hides in the dark cell only to retrieve her autonomy and control over her life and that of her children. In one scene, she writes that spending seven years hiding in that dreary loophole is much better than spending one night with a hypocrite monstrous master and jealous mistress.; slavery hardened her character as a mother and as a woman; she chooses to rebel and face the cruelty than to see her children sold and displaced from one hand to another(107).

The slave's mother life is filled with darker days; she experiences the continuous blows of exploitation and suffrage. When living in the master's house or in the plantation, the slave mother and woman is obliged to be physically and psychologically abused. Sexual violence and abuse dominates the life of slave women and draws dreary discrimination for her and for her family. When she gives birth to her fatherless children, she faces new kinds of sorrows. Her children might be sold and taken away and her family ties might be destructed.

Finally, a slave's family is destroyed by the hand of slavery. Jacobs in her story tells her readers about how slavery is violent and hard. She describes how she, as a slave girl and mother, lived under such brutal and harassing circumstances. She gives a detailed description of cruelty and abuse she and her sisters in slavery were condemned to bear. By the end of her narration, she affirms that the desire of mother is more powerful than the will of hypocrite abusive masters. Her, strong inclination to be free and to attain the autonomy of her children supported her to overcome violence and torment imposed on her by slavery and slaveholders. For her, the hand of slavery and oppression is less powerful than slave mother's love and dream of freedom.

Chapter III: Overcoming Slavery in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

In most slave autobiographies, Black female writers focus on darkness of slavery and on the way they challenged whites' domination and cruelty. They shed lights on oppression, violence and broken relations in the slave community. Throughout the autobiography, Jacobs shows that though she is a slave mother, she never surrendered; she did not accept humiliation and inferiority imposed by white free men. Throughout her life, she witnessed the hardships and violence, first, as a slave girl, and secondly, as a mother. She had always defeated her master's sexual threatening and put an end to his vicious abuse, and ultimately she drew her path to freedom and was reunified with her children in the Northern States.

In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet Ann Jacobs describes the harsh and cruel master's abuse that she was obliged to witness and subdue. Jacobs experienced offensive situation in which her life was threatened to be violently treated and manipulated. Through her story, Jacobs reflects her constant pain and struggle to resist against sexism and discrimination. Jacobs succeeded in her fight against her master's deprivation and wretchedness because of family love, yearning for freedom, and successful retrieval of her children which were the major triggers for her breaking free. However, as a former slave, her main aim is to tell Northerners and people in general about the dark side of slavery. Jacobs asserts "Northerners know nothing at all about slavery. They think it is perpetual bondage only. They have no conception of the depth of degradation_ involved in that word, SLAVERY; if they had, they would never cease their efforts until so horrible system was overthrown" (1). For her, slavery is horrible that northerners should know about it and stop its domination.

On the one hand, deep faith and belief in God had a very crucial effect on Jacobs' life and helped her to preserve her existence and that of her children. Literacy,

on the other hand, played a major role in forming a challenging, brave, and intellectual person and independent identity. In fact, education and literacy were a powerful means that was used by slave women to defeat slavery and cruelty of masters and slave bondage. Jacobs as a former slave woman used her literacy to escape the hypocrisy of her master through tricking his thoughts and dirty plans.

In addition, sisterhood was an important motive for Jacobs to achieve her longing dream of disenfranchisement. Sisterhood and collaboration of both Black and White women in South and North America provided Jacobs with a sense of confidence and reinforcements to strive her desires. The number of women supported her dream had a greater impact on her struggle to reject the degradation and marginalization embedded in the term slavery.

III.1. Religion and Faith, a Passage towards Freedom

Religion is a recurring theme in slave narratives. It is considered a source of power for slaves and helps them along the way to freedom. In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, religion plays the role of the guider; it enlightens the road to breaking bondage and discrimination. In the whole work, the author insists on the fact that faith and strong belief in God was her weapon to reach her ultimate goal, freedom. Faith and belief in Christianity was a power of resistance and support. Consequently, religion was used by slaves to claim justice and civil rights. In other words, religion was the tool that helped them retrieve their humanity and dignity. Jacobs found power in her beliefs and love for God; she was sure that God knows better the reasons why HE put them in such harsh circumstances, and thus HE would bless her pains and recompense her patience and strivings. Jacobs writes “It was a beautiful faith coming from a mother who could not call her children her own. But I, and Benjamin her youngest boy, condemned it. We reasoned that it was much more the will of God that we should be situated as she was”

(17). Jacobs accepts the will of God to live as a slave, but she rejects the fact that she should bear the cruelty and evil practices of her villainous master.

However, slaves could not practice their religion freely and easily. Slaves faced many difficulties in terms of its practice and authenticity. When slaves searched for the right religion, they were confused between what is real and what hypocrite religion is. In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Jacobs tries to tell her readers how black African slaves faced violence and racism and mainly how slave women were raped and sexually exploited. Consequently, she expresses how religion introduced relief for the oppressed slave women. Christianity provided them with lessening of pains and suffrage.

Jacobs sees that the idea of being a slave owner contradicts with worshipping God. A slave master who whips his slaves and more violently rapes the weak lonely slave girls could not worship God. It is unreasonable that a slaveholder who buys and sells slave children far from their mothers to call himself a churchman or God-fearing. Jacobs considers the religion and Christianity of slave owners and masters is fake and hypocrite. In this context, she affirms “The class leader was the town constable--a man who bought and sold slaves, who whipped his brethren and sisters of the church at the public whipping post, in jail or out of jail” (Jacobs 66). Religion was taught to the ignorant slaves by hypocrite black-hearted men who used to torture their slaves and whip them till the blood is torn from their flesh. Whites’ are for Jacobs horrible and fell.

Jacobs tries to describe how Christianity and truthful religion provided guidance and appreciation of humanity for the enslaved black Africans. On the other hand, Jacobs affirms that religion of whites was an excuse to justify their violent action. Though both slaves and slave owners’ religion was practiced and interpreted differently, masters and slaves had interpreted the Bible in a way that suits their

benefits and way of living. Miriam Adwoa Ganaah (28) states that the fact that whites imposed Christianity on black African slaves was a tool to manipulate their minds and destiny, therefore, to keep them in bondage and provide them with a new identity and way of thinking. In other words, Ganaah intends to say that the reason behind whites' manipulation of Bible is that to keep slaves obedient to the will of their masters, therefore, to protect the existence of slave institution.

While white slave owners sought to use religion, Christianity in particular, as a tool to establish hegemony and control over black African slaves eventually leading to the widespread and popularity of chattel slavery among whites, the majority of enslaved blacks Africans embraced Christianity mainly as an enclave in an uncongenial environment that deprived them freedom and imposed, as it were, a new identity on them.

For the autobiography in question, Jacobs finds hope in believing in God and that He would end her plight and preserve a better future for her and for her children. Her deep belief and love for God supported her search for freedom and emancipation. Though she faced a lot of obstacles in worshipping and practicing her religious rituals, Jacobs never surrendered and carried her fight to attain her dignity as a free lady. Throughout the incidents of the novel, Jacobs portrays the brutal and harsh violence she faced. She had been separated from her children, but unlike the other slave mothers she refused humiliations and triumphed over her persecution.

Religion was not a power for Jacobs only, but many slaves mentioned in the autobiography manifested their love and trust in God to end their bondage. Unfortunately, all of them were exposed to hypocrisy and manipulation in the name of the Bible. White slave masters provided different interpretations of the verses of the

Bible to their slaves. These wrong interpretations were intended to make slaves loving and obedient to their owners and drew poor Africans in confusion and disruption. The impact of this hypocrisy on slave mothers was that they accepted the poor conditions and believed that they cannot feel or live as normal mothers. Many slave mothers were convinced that they were separated from their little children because recommended it in the Bible, and as sinful creatures they should not rebel against the commands of God. Jacobs, however, did not accept ignorance and misery and challenged the evils of slavery and ultimately succeeded.

Throughout the novel, Jacobs expresses her strong desire to be free and to experience motherhood like any normal liberated woman. She faced many atrocities but she raised above them through her beliefs and trust in God and rightful Bible. In the chapter entitled "Still in prison" Jacobs (113) explains "I thought God was a compassionate Father, who would forgive my sins for the sake of my sufferings". Jacobs in her work is sure that God would help her to achieve her goal, and all her sufferings would not be in vain. Deep belief and love for God is a consolation for her burdens. Furthermore, all good and positive events in Jacobs' life are always attributed to God; she kept thanking God for every single happy moment in her life. Her satisfaction is always related to God and his desires. Jacobs never forgot those who stood in her beside, God, family, and friends.

In the chapter entitled "The church and Slavery" Jacobs narrates "His text was, 'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh; with fear and trembling, in singleness of your hearts, as unto Christ' " (64). For Jacobs, whites Christianity aims at dehumanizing the black slaves preserve their dependency on their cruel monstrous masters. She indicates that Africans should serve their vicious masters to the words. Few slaves rebelled because they were not able to distinguish the true

religion and belief. They followed the terms and command of the Bible and believed to be obedient to God who orders them to serve slave owners and never rebel. Jacobs (65) adds “Hearken, ye servants! Give strict heed unto my words. You are rebellious sinners.” Slaves were mentally and psychologically manipulated to accept their inferior status.

Slave owners have never been truly religious. Their intention was to limit the lives of blacks in the plantations; moreover, they feared that if slaves think to rebel, masters’ lives and wealth will be in danger. For instance, Jacobs (65) declares “You must forsake your sinful ways, and be faithful servants. Obey your old master and your young master - - your old mistress and your young mistress”. When slaves listen to these fake verses of Bible, their feeling will be weakened and their thoughts will certainly drive them to believe that they are inferior and will no longer feel desirous to leave bondage or claim their basic rights as ordinary human beings.

Jacobs, however, explains that she and her relatives reached their freedom because their belief in God. Aunt Martha, Linda’s grandmother succeeded in assuring her two sons freedom. For instance, when she knew that her son Benjamin reached the Free States, she knelt on her knees and prayed for God to protect him. God has been always a guide to Jacobs and her grandmother, they believed that God does not like that one of his lovers is harshly tortured and maltreated Jacobs (21) illustrates, “Mother and son talked together. He asked her pardon for the suffering he had caused her. She said he had nothing to forgive; she could not blame his desire for freedom”. Other slave mothers prayed for God to protect their children and guarantee them freedom and dignity. Slave mothers’ hearts always believed in God and prayed for him to bless the lives of their dearer children. Aunt Martha and Jacobs as well prayed and knelt to God

to protect their children and reward their pains and sufferings; the slave mother's prayer has never forsaken.

Jacobs knew that white masters' practice of religion was hypocrite and their pretensions to take care of their weak and humiliated slaves were artificial and counterfeit. She never gave up neither to sexual exploitation nor to her master's fake terms that concluded that Linda should obey her master to the terms. Instead, she fought against bondage and succeeded to break the chains of humiliation and perpetual torture. In one of the incidents Jacobs states "I saw that constable class leader become crimson in the face with suppressed laughter, while he held up his handkerchief, that those who were weeping for the poor woman's calamity might not see his merriments" (67). The churchman mocks the pains of a slave mother who weeps because all her children were taken away and her family was destroyed. This indicates that emotions and justification of the hypocrite whites were just to dominate slaves' minds and control their lives.

In Jacobs' narratives, she tells how she reunites with her children in the North. Her long spiritual and physical conquest flourished at last. Her innocent beliefs that God would recompense her and make her happy by the end of her war motivated her to break free and satisfied her thirst for motherhood and love for her little lovely children.

By the end of her story, mother's desire to live free and safe with her children was the victor in this war. Jacobs is no longer a slave; she is free and her children also. Her repressed love and broken family did not prevent her from reaching the Free States. She broke the shackles of enslavement and defeated her masters' villainous craving to break her wish of being free lady. Mercifully, her strong credence in the Lord that her dolours would end and the light of license would set straight her destiny. She was sure

that God would compensate her hard efforts and endue her life and more importantly that of her children.

In fact, religion was not the only source of assistance and victory for Jacobs. Literacy on the other hand played a decisive role in her life and her breaking free from slavery. Her thirst for knowledge and truth had a great impact on her journey towards freedom. It was a weapon to face lies and hypocrisy. When relating religion to literacy, education helped Jacobs to differentiate the faultless religion and words of God from those of the hypocrite masters. Jacobs (64) says “I was invited because I could read” literacy and religion are linked together mainly for those slave women who benefited from their good literacy and right religion.

Literacy was a backing to slave mothers to defeat all kinds of oppression. When Jacobs was displaced and separated from her family, her literacy and intelligence saved her from the cruelty and brutality of bondage. When she was in the garret hiding in her grandmother’s house, her master was seeking her steps, however, her literacy and intelligence helped her to escape and help her children as well.

Moreover, meanwhile she was hiding in the crawling cell; she wrote many letters to her master to mislead him, an intelligent step of an intellectual slave mother. Those letters took the address of different places in the North so that Dr. Flint would believe that Jacobs was really in the North and that she is out of his reach. An intelligent step that only a brave person would do. Jacobs the courage and lioness heart was brave enough to do such an action. Her love for her children and support provided from those around her gave her power to pursue her dream of freedom.

Jacobs, in fact, is a lucky slave woman because unlike a lot of the slave girls, she was taught and educated by her mistress, a fact that turned to be a good point in her life because her literacy played a major role in her fight and challenge of slavery and

oppressive manners of her master and mistress. In other words, it was a winner card in her fight against violence and oppression. Literacy in the life of a slave girl was power and encouraged self confidence and strong belief in God. Thirst for knowledge and religion was crucial to satisfy mother's thirst for freedom and family. Ultimately, her literacy was used to give voice to all slave women that were neglected in the South. Her literacy aided her to write her story and address women in the North so that they give hands in the fight against slavery. Jacobs is the symbol of the woman warrior who did not relent to the ferocious abuse of her master and mistress.

III.2.Sisterhood, a Power of Resistance

In *Incidents*, black slave women and mothers are set together because they experienced the same degrading and harsh sexual and physical torment. Oppression and violence are present all over the work; Jacobs narrates the lives of multiple slave mothers who lived under slavery and experienced the pains of such hard circumstances. Slave mothers shared sexual and emotional violence; they were all separated from their families and children. They were exposed to the same bad conditions which were imposed by their masters, mistresses and slave institution. Nina Boniscova writes "Jacobs is the one who gives the strongest tribute to the help and support she obtained from other people in her attempt to fight slavery and the condition it imposed upon her" (128). For Boniscova Jacobs exemplifies the model of the slave mother who fights against her enemies and got the help of many around her for the sake of being free. After fleeing to the North, Jacobs acknowledges the efforts of her family and relatives in addition to many people she met in her way to liberty. She considers them as the major internal power that supported her belief in freedom and purpose of ending whites' domination to her life. These people were a source of back-up and support for Jacobs who ultimately benefited from their assistance to achieve her ultimate goal.

The strong family ties, friendship, and sisterhood are key elements in Jacobs' work. Jacobs highlights the importance and the impact of sisterhood and women's collaboration on her success in gaining freedom. Sisterly bond is shared by women in the novel, slave black mothers as well as white southern and Northern ladies. Jacobs finds refuge in love and pity that were given by women around her. Women around Jacobs shared the same sufferings and suffrage; therefore, they presented support and safety since they feel the common despair.

From the early years of her life, Jacobs acknowledges the memories of the good women who played major role in her life. These women made a difference in her journey towards freedom which was the main responsible for attaining her freedom, and more importantly that of her children, Ellen and Benny. When she was a child, Jacobs's mistress taught her to read and write and feel herself free the same as the other children of her age. This sense of independency had a crucial influence on Jacobs' life later on when she challenged the hypocrisy of her master and his followers.

With time, Jacobs clearly distinguishes how hypocrite her master and slavery were. In the chapter entitled "Free At Last" Jacobs (181) states that "The more my mind had become enlightened, the more difficult it was for me to consider myself an article of property; and to pay money to those who had so grievously oppressed me seemed like taking from my sufferings the glory of triumph". With the continuous ups and downs in Jacobs' life, she no longer accepts to pay money for her freedom. As a consequence, she prefers to fight and challenge. Moreover, the assistance she got from her friends in the South and North gave her strength to carry on her war.

The most obvious sisterly bond represented in *Incidents* is that that is shared between grandchildren and grandmother. Linda says "I secretly mourned over the sorrow I was bringing on my grandmother, who had so tried to shield me from harm"

(53). Linda (Jacobs) and Aunt Martha presented a good example of women collaboration and assistance. Aunt Martha provided good support in Linda's hard times. She introduced moral and psychological support to all her family members, mainly for Linda and her children. She always played the role of mother and presented security for Linda. Jacobs adds "I went to my grandmother. My lips moved to make confession, but the words stuck in of my throat. I sat down in the shade of a tree at her door and began to sew. I think she saw something unusual was the matter with me. The mother of slaves is very watchful" (54). What Jacobs intends to say is that she always went back to her grandmother's breast to search for tenderness and love. Moreover, her grandmother was always caring about Jacobs's life, health, food clothes, and happiness. From her early years and the death of her parents, Jacobs found comfort in her grandmother's breast.

A slave woman needs protection and Jacobs found it in Aunt Martha's arms. Aunt Martha has been always a balsam to her granddaughter's pains. In fact, Aunt Martha was the most powerful lady and mother in the novel; she highly participated in tearing away the chains of bondage from Jacobs' life. She forced the sorrows of slavery, cruelty and oppression to come to its end. Her big love and tenderness provided power for Jacobs to change her life and fate. This emotional support pushed Jacobs to overcome her fear and to defeat the sorrows of oppression and repressed emotions. Linda says "My grandmother and Benny were there. She took me by the hand, and said, 'Linda, let us pray.' We knelt down together, with my child pressed to my heart, and my other arm round the faithful, loving old friend I was about to leave forever"(143). Grandmother was the relief and peace that Linda longs for and always blesses.

The grandmother was the source of faith and relief to Jacobs, from the early years of her life; she stood by her side till she got freedom at last. Grandmother's sacrifices were much more valuable for Jacobs than the dreary sufferings she lived under the institution of slavery. After giving birth to two children, Benny and Ellen of Mr. Sands, Jacobs was no longer accepted by her master and mistress in their house and faced a lot of physical, verbal, and psychological threatening for which she needed refuge and protection. Jacobs was empowered by the sisterly and family bond and Aunt Martha was the strongest bond and tie that Jacobs ever had. Jacobs writes about her grandmother "While he was speaking, the door was unlocked, and she came in with a small bag of money, which she wanted me to take. I begged her to keep a part of it, at least, to pay for Benny's being sent to the north; but she insisted, while her tears were falling fast, that I should take the whole (143). Grandmother was not only spiritual support to Jacobs but she also aided her financially. She knew that the journey costs money and effort. Therefore, she offered all what may help and comfort her darling granddaughter. Aunt Martha's heart is warmer and thoughtful about her daughter and her little grandchildren and Jacobs found remedy in her grandmother's midst.

Jacobs thanks the almighty God for his protection and caring. HE has been always in her side. While in the Southern bondage and in the Northern purchased sovereignty, HE always blessed her steps and blessed her pains with her grandmother's watchful eyes. "On no other occasion has it ever been my lot to listen to so fervent a supplication for mercy and protection. It thrilled through my heart, and inspired me with trust in God" (143). Aunt Martha aided Jacobs to reach the North and supplied her with all she can in order to have her children by her side. Jacobs managed to defeat her master thanks to the loving grandmother.

When Jacobs arrived to the North, she met new people who were kind and understanding. All those Northern gentlemen and women listened to Jacobs's story and sympathized with her situation. Moreover, they promised to provide help and assistance whenever needed. In the novel, Jacobs mentions two major women who played a crucial role in Jacobs's happiness, Mrs. Durham and Mrs. Bruce.

In one of the scenes, Jacobs arrives to the North and was taken to the house of Durham's family. The depressed and doubting mother is astonished by the new surrounding and could not trust any of the white people. However, the kindness she found in Mrs. Durham makes her change her mind and gets a new vision about whites. Jacobs affirms

Mrs. Durham entered her face all beaming with kindness, to say that there was an anti-slavery friend down stairs, who would like to see me. I overcame my dread of encountering strangers, and went with her. Many questions were asked concerning my experiences, and my escape from slavery; but I observed how careful they all were not to say anything that might wound my feelings(148).

Unlike the southerners, northerners for Jacobs were more understanding and caring about black people's feelings and sufferings. Jacobs, the sad mother, hides her emotions through all her journey, but the kindness and pity presented by women in the North gave her some release and comfort. Sisterhood relationship in the life of fugitive slave mother played a standing role in her life. It provides relief and a sense of peace after long years of oppression and fear. Ultimately, this bond was a reason for Jacobs to finish what she has started.

While in the North, Jacobs is reunified with her dear children after long years of concealment. She finally meets her children but unfortunately feels unsecure with them.

For instance, when she meets her little daughter Ellen, Jacobs recognizes that she cannot be with her daughter without taking the permission of Mrs. Hobbs, the one who takes care of Ellen. At that instance, Jacobs is convinced that she should take her emancipation and get her freedom. "I returned to my friend's house in an uneasy state of mind. In order to protect my children, it was necessary that I should own myself. I called myself free, and sometimes felt so; but I knew I was insecure". Linda describes how her fear is risen again by the insecurity she encountered in the North. Moreover, her former masters in the south were still searching for her and putting plans to take her back to the plantation. News that frightened Jacobs and motivated her to move and get rid of this fearful moments in her life(153).

Thankfully, God blesses Jacobs's sufferings and pains with Mrs. Bruce, the kind and respectful lady, who understands Jacobs's situation and provides her with help and support. "The heavenly Father had been most merciful to me in leading me to this place. Mrs. Bruce was a kind and gentle lady, and proved a true and sympathizing friend" (154). Mrs. Bruce was very kind and respectful to Linda and provided her with moral and emotional support. She understood her situation and tried to help her in retrieving her health and children as well. She expresses "Many ladies would have thoughtlessly discharged me; but Mrs. Bruce made arrangements to save me steps, and employed a physician to attend upon me (154). The injured slave mother had a lot of physical pains after her seven years of concealment and her long trip from South to North. Mrs. Bruce tried to cure Jacobs and take care of her so that she retrieve her health and carry on her struggle to bring back her children. When Jacobs reached the North she could scarcely retrieve her health or move her legs, but Mrs. Bruce appointed a physician for her to help her stand again to carry on her fight. Mrs. Bruce was another tie for Jacobs to continue her struggle and fulfill her desire to freedom and her yearning

oppressed sense of motherhood. "I was dreaming of freedom again; more for my children's sake than my own. I planned and I planned. Obstacles hit against plans. There seemed no way of overcoming them; and yet I hoped" (77). In this quote, Linda affirms how her strong desire to see her children free was the trigger and only motive for her to break bondage and defeat her oppressing antagonists. Although the many obstacles she found in her way, and though many people tried to break her down and tear her hopes, she never surrendered. Jacobs kept fighting and never gave in. Jacobs states "I had a woman's pride, and a mother's love for my children; and I resolved that out of the darkness of this hour a brighter dawn should rise for them" (80). This illustrates that her sense of motherhood in addition to the sense of sisterhood she found in the Northern ladies helped her wildly in her brave war.

In the last chapter entitled "Free at last" Jacobs narrates the courage and big efforts done by Mrs. Bruce in order to help Linda to gain her freedom. In this chapter, Mrs. Bruce found that the life of Jacobs is in danger and she should do something about it. In this incident the feeling and the strong tie of sisterhood introduced by Mrs. Bruce proves how Jacobs found comfort and support in her kind friends and sisters. "She said her house was watched, and it was possible that some clew to me might be obtained. I refused to take her advice. She pleaded with an earnest tenderness, that ought to have moved me; but I was in a bitter, disheartened mood" (180). Jacobs explains how her new friend and helper tried hard to save her and protect her life. Mrs. Bruce does not want Jacobs to lose her struggle. She supports her case and understands her situation and faithfully provides protection and care for Jacobs who was always limited by the chains of slavery, the threat of abusive sexuality, and the repressed love under the frightening laws of slavery and human bondage.

Mrs. Bruce goes in negotiations with Jacobs previous masters and finally buys her freedom. Jacobs finally feels sad because she ended her war against the segregating and cruel system of slavery by giving money to be free in the states that claim civilization and democracy. However, she understands and appreciates the efforts and sacrifices of Mrs. Bruce and blesses her kindness. Jacobs affirms

The next day, baby and I set out in a heavy snow storm, bound for New England again. I received letters from the City of Iniquity, addressed to me under an assumed name. In a few days one came from Mrs. Bruce, informing me that my new master was still searching for me, and that she intended to put an end to this persecution by buying my freedom(181).

Mrs. Bruce did not only pay money to buy the freedom of Jacobs but she also sent her baby with her when she was hiding from her new follower master. When Mrs. Bruce ended the long days of doubt and fear Jacobs was obliged to witness, she aided Jacobs to have a new life and new hopes and happiness. Writes Jacobs (182) “By the next mail I received this brief letter from Mrs. Bruce: ‘I am rejoiced to tell you that the money for your freedom has been paid to Mr. Dodge. Come home to-morrow. I long to see you and my sweet babe’ ”. Jacobs is free at last, her war terminated and all her sufferings diminished. There would be no more of tearful nights, nor oppressive words and whippings. She is finally a free mother in the Free States far from slavery and segregation. Jacobs concludes “So I was sold at last! A human being sold in the free city of New York! The bill of sale is on record, and future generations will learn from it that women were articles of traffic in New York, late in the nineteenth century of the Christian religion”(182). Well Jacobs is free at last, her story has ended not as planned of course by living free without any bill of sale, but as all the other slaves she

paid money for it. However, the support and help she got from her relatives mainly sisters and mothers and their impact on her life could not be forgotten. Jacobs acknowledges what they done for her and never neglected their role in her life and that of her children.

In the life of slave women, sorrows are an obligatory feeling that was imposed on the hearts of bondswomen and mothers. They were oppressed and violated psychologically and physically, however, their strong faith and belief in the power of God to discontinue their sufferings gave them a fruitful hope to end slavery and brutality. Moreover, assistance and support played the role of relief and confinement to their injuries caused by the horrible commands of slave owners and laws. Literacy, then, set straight their plans and goals of how to defeat cruelty and attain their longed freedom and self determination.

Conclusion

Jacobs's autobiography *Incidents* accounts for the life story of a slave girl who was manipulated and abused by the dirty hands of slavery and white slave masters. Violence, oppression, discrimination, racism, and sexual exploitation are the prominent features and themes of this slave narrative. The story portrays the experiences of slave mothers under the discrimination and cruelty of Southern American community who previously declared slavery to be a matter of religion and law.

The story depicts various images of violence and oppression against black slave mothers who suffered physical, psychological, and verbal outrage. Jacobs describes the various forms of violence exercised on women by their white masters and mistresses in addition to law and hypocrite interpretations of the verses of Bible. In her novel, she sheds light on the life of Jacobs when she lost her parents and how she was sent to her master's house to take care of the family. From then, worse things started to enter her life. The nervous mistress and the dirty corrupted old master started to treat Jacobs violently abusing her mind and thoughts, and finally trying hard to oppress her. For the vicious master, Dr. Flint, he tried his utmost to defeat Jacobs desire to be free and get rid of his malicious sexual threats. However, they were Jacobs's children who empowered her to overcome violence and cruelty imposed by the malevolent master.

As discussed in the two last chapters, Jacobs was living under a harsh situation. Her body and soul were tortured and injured. Nevertheless, the female solidarity played the role of back up and support for Jacobs. Jacobs found relief in the assistance provided for her in both south and north. A good example is that of her grandmother, Aunt Martha who was a source of physical comfort and psychological relief to the injured grandchild, Jacobs. Many brave women helped and assisted Jacobs to achieve

her desire of freedom; they all refused slavery and all participated in the struggle against segregation and bondage.

Moreover, Jacobs was empowered by her strong belief in God and her literacy which were both a weaponry tool for her to fight and carry on her fight to defeat the violence hidden in the name of humanity and Christianity. A literate slave woman was a threat to her master's business and dirty ambitions; she therefore differentiates between civilization and whites' hypocrisy. The protagonist slave mother, eventually, achieves her freedom and emancipates her children. Therefore, she succeeds in breaking the iron chains and shackles of bondage and discrimination.

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Resumé

Le but de la présente étude est d'analyser les thèmes de la maternité des esclaves et de la violence dans Harriet Jacobs *Incidents dans la vie d'une fille esclave*. En tant qu'écrivaine narratrice esclave, Harriet Ann Jacobs décrit sa vie dans l'esclavage et jette la lumière sur la violence et les souffrances auxquelles sont confrontées les femmes esclaves. Comme les autres écrivains des récits des esclaves, Jacobs a pour but de décrire les difficultés et la discrimination que subissent les mères esclaves et leur combat pour obtenir leur liberté et celle de leurs enfants. Par conséquent, le fait d'examiner l'oppression et la violence subissent des esclaves noires, permet d'analyser les thèmes de la maternité, de l'oppression. Cette étude s'intéresse également à expliquer le rôle de la religion et de l'éducation dans le combat de la libération de l'esclavagisme.

ملخص

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو مناقشة موضوع الأمومة والعنف في رواية هاربيت جاكوبز في أحداث في حياة فتاة الرقيق. ككاتبة مسرحية للرقيق ، تقدم هاربيت آن جاكوبز Harriet Ann Jacobs 1861 حياتها في العبودية وتسليط الضوء على العنف والمعاناة التي تواجهها النساء والعبيد في أيدي الأسياد . لكانتقروائية ، تهدف جاكوبز لوصف الجهود والتميز التي تواجهها الأمهات العبيد لأجل الحفاظ على حريتهم و حرية أطفالهم. لذلك، بلقاء الضوء على الاضطهاد والعنف المحتم علي العبيد السود، أحاول تحليل موضوع الأمومة والقمع والتغلب على العبودية بالإضافة إلى تأثير الدين و التعلم على حياة النساء للتحرر من القمع و العنف.