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KATEDRA ANGLISTIKY A AMERIKANISTIKY

AFRO-AMERICAN FEMINISM

(bakalářská práce)

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I declare that I worked on this bachelor thesis independently and that I included the complete list of used and cited literature.

In Olomouc _____

Signature _____

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The Acronyms used:

CIC	The Council for Interracial Cooperation
CORE	The Congress of Racial Equality
NAACP	The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NACW	The National Association of Colored Women
NAWSA	The National American Woman Suffrage Association
NBFO	The National Black Feminist Organization
NCLU	The National Colored Labor Union
NCNW	The National Council of Negro Women
NOW	The National Organization for Women
SCLC	The Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SNCC	The Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee
UNIA	The Universal Negro Improvement Association
YWCA	The Young Women's Christian Association

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1. Introduction

In my bachelor thesis I concentrate on the topic of Afro-American feminism. I tried to create a brief guide to the history of Afro-American women and their movements. I used mainly book sources but also electronic sources – databases provided by the library of Palacky University.

The history of Afro-American feminism is really wide. I attempted to pick up the most important events, figures and dates. The development of Afro-American feminism is closely connected with the civil rights development of the Afro-American citizens in the United States of America.

To have a complex picture about the Afro-American women, it is beneficial to know basic facts about their background and environment. That is the reason why I also mentioned several historic events linked with the development of rights of both the Afro-American women and men.

Afro-American feminism was and still is strongly influenced by “white” feminism. Usually, when “white” feminism was on its top, Afro-American feminism was struggling at the bottom and vice versa.

In my work I also deal with the relationship between the Afro-American women and white women and the competition between the two groups.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter, *The Early History of Afro-American Women in the U.S.A.*, it is described how the Afro-American women and also the Afro-American men appeared in the United States and how they struggled during the slavery.

The second chapter, *Afro-American Feminism from 1900 to 1960*, provides a view of the situation after the abolition of the slavery, the women’s struggle for their right to vote and the entry of the U.S.A. into the First and later on into the Second World War.

The third chapter, *The 1960s and After*, focuses on the most important period of the civil rights movement in the 1960s and the following development of Afro-American feminism.

The last chapter, *The 1980s and After, Black Feminism and Womanism*, covers with Afro-American feminism in the 1980s. It also contains definitions of Afro-American feminism and of the term feminist, differences between “white” feminism and black feminism and also distinctions between womanism and black feminism.

2. The Early History of Afro-American Women in the U.S.A.

The process of colonization of the “New World” was as hard as the colonizing of the other parts of the world. Tough conditions such as diseases, starvation, bitter cold, Indian attacks etc. and the lack of labour resulted in several solutions of which the possibility of Negro slaves seemed to be the best option for “white” settlers. The first Negro slaves were under protection of the international law but it changed soon with the increasing need for labour. One of the possible reasons why the Negro slaves were treated differently than their white “colleagues” could be that free wage labour and temporary servitude were not suitable for settlers (masters) because of a certain kind of responsibilities and also duties. Moreover, the slaves’ labour was cheap, easy to maintain and simple to replace in case of death caused by overwork. The labour of the Negro slaves was mainly used for the southern cotton and tobacco plantations. The British, the French, the Portuguese, the Spanish and the Americans were considered to be the best suppliers of that commodity.¹

The first Afro-Americans arrived in America, Virginia in 1619. It is estimated that more than 20,000,000 of black men and black women were taken from Africa. They were delivered to the American continent on ships under unimaginable conditions. There was no space in the lower deck and slaves were kept in chains without any bathing facilities, surrounded by human excreta. Sometimes they were allowed to go on deck during their 5 or 6 weeks’ voyage. Women were used as a company for “white” males. When the crew ran out of their food reserves, it was their “cargo” who suffered the most. Dead bodies were thrown into the sea and the crew was even capable of leaving their ship without the cargo, which was still chained in the lower deck, in case of some diseases or damaged vessels. For some other reasons, such as to be free or at least die, slavers’ revolts often took place on the ship. The first cargos were unloaded in the West Indies where the slaves, in case they were healthy and capable of work, were taught to speak English, wear clothes, do work on plantations, profess Christianity etc. The population of the assimilated slaves was about two million and before the beginning of the Civil War that amount doubled.²

There were several options for a Negro woman slave, but unfortunately she herself could not influence the final decision. She could work on one of large cotton plantations

¹ Richard D. Brown, ed. Slavery in American Society (Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1969) 1-108.

² Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 1959) 3-21.

where she was supervised by an overseer. That option was the most brutal and exploitative one. Or she could work as a “house servant” in such a place with much better conditions. Another option was to labour on a smaller plantation with not so many slaves working together with their master. The fourth option was to live in states such as Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland and so on and “produce” other slaves, who were later sold to cotton states. Such a procedure was also used on plantations where a master wanted to increase his labour or the number of salable slaves. Those black women were, of course, much more valuable. Thanks to the fact, female slaves were not sold so often as male slaves and they were considered to be stable members of a black family in comparison with men.³

In the 17th century a white man who had a sexual intercourse or even a child with a black woman was severely punished in certain American states (e.g. Virginia, Bermuda and Maryland). Any black female servant who had a child by her master had to serve for two more years and then she was sold to church-wardens for whom she would work in tobacco fields. Interracial marriages were at first abolished. The couple were either excluded from the colony or in the case of a freeborn Englishwoman wife, a woman was also enslaved. Because of its misapplication, it was later on rescinded by court. In the 19th century the status of a child was determined according to the status of his/her mother. In accordance with the Census in 1860, there were about 588, 000 of mulattoes who were from the interracial marriages or relationships. That was one of the reasons which later led to the anti-slavery movement which was under the control of white women.⁴

In its early development slavery was tough. The slaves had to face physical abuse, dismemberment and torture. In the 18th century masters were aware of that situation and did not underestimate attempts for a possible insurrection. The anxiety was not without a cause. Especially, black women were good at poisoning their masters or at arson attacks to resist the slavery. If caught, the black women were punished even worse than their companions. They were burned alive at the stake or even hanged.⁵

The approach to the Afro-American people changed with the beginning of the Revolutionary War (The American War of Independence). With the increasing need for additional soldiers and the awareness that the English tried to use the slaves for their benefit, the Americans had to change their minds towards the black people. That meant a

³ Flexner 19-21.

⁴ Brown 1-108.

⁵ Paula Giddings, When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America (New York: Bantam Books, 1988) 39-55.

small but precious contribution to the rights of slaves. While in the North the participation of the black people in the Revolutionary War was in progress, the competition between the white working class and slaves and the beginning of the industrialization quickened the abolition of the slavery. On the contrary, in the South the slavery flourished thanks to the invention of the cotton gin. The new slavery was characterized by “greater” masters’ protection and lesser brutality which was set in new slaves’ codes in order to prevent the slaves from potential revolts during the time of the increasing number of freed men and freed women. However, the slaves were not allowed to educate themselves or to participate in any movement. The new slavery also laid emphasis on family values. Masters stopped selling the slaves away from their families which should have prevented them from escapes and uprisings. Black women tried to infix family values in their offsprings’ minds but they were not always successful. It sometimes built an unscalable wall in the relation between a child and a mother. Mothers were capable of destroying themselves or even killing their children (especially girls) to protect them from the impact of white men. It was unacceptable to have a baby with a white man or to be married to a white man in the Afro-American community. The Afro-American women started to use all possible contraceptives in order not to give birth to other possible slaves and to obtain the control over their own bodies. Those women who decided to run away were determined to kill their children in case they would have been caught rather than to go back and let white people make slaves of their children.⁶

The case of Margaret Garner (Kentucky, 1856) who was captured on her runaway and who killed her child rather than come back to her master inspired Toni Morrison, the Pulitzer Prize winner, to write her novel *Beloved* which was published in 1987.⁷

The 19th century brought several changes concerning the Afro-American question. As regards the options of the Afro-American women to work in that century, the most common way of earning money for a black woman was domestic work. There was not a big competition due to the impossibility for white women to do such work. On the other hand, black men had more opportunities than their women, but they had to compete with

⁶ Giddings 41-55.

⁷ Beverly Guy Sheftall, “Black Feminism in the United States,” *An African-American Reader-essays on African-American History, Culture and Society*, ed. William R. Scott and William G. Shade (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2005) 295.

white men. That issue together with the low-pay and unemployment or underemployment disadvantaged the black men which resulted in many conflicts in black families.⁸

In the 1800s free black women started to organize their own organization with their own political, cultural or intellectual agendas due to the impossibility to be a part of male organizations and the impossibility to join organizations of white women. One of the first organizations was for example the Afric-American Female Intelligence Society of Boston (1831) or the Massachusetts Female Antislavery Society (1833). That Afro-American women's effort also contributed to the historic women's rights gathering at Seneca Falls in 1848.⁹

In 1851 in Ohio, Sojourner Truth, an early black feminist, through her speech "Ain't I A Woman" at women's right convention, gave a statement of the black feminist thought.¹⁰

As for the educating of the black women, to obtain any education in the 19th century was even no easy task for the white women and for the black ones it was nearly impossible. According to men, women should have stayed at home, taken care of their households and husbands and should not have cared about "men's business". To educate a slave posed a threat for his/her master because educated slaves were said to be able to easily arrange the insurrection. In some states the education of slaves was actually prohibited. Even though the black woman was free, her opportunities for the education were limited. The first educational institution intended for anyone without regard to race, color or even sex was set up in 1833 in Ohio thanks to Mrs. Willard. In Louisiana, South Carolina and Georgia the black women's attempts to establish schools for colored children of freed slaves appeared, but those efforts were very rare. In the North the colored children were excluded from common schools until the Civil War although, for example in 1840 in Ohio, the slaves were taxed to support "public schools". It led to a huge movement of the black women from that area. Another female venture to teach black girls was made by Prudence Crandall. She was influenced by her servant who was a freed black woman. At first, Mrs. Crandall started to teach one black girl in her school for girls but when a storm of protests raised, she was forced to close the school. However, it did not discourage her from the opening of a school only for black pupils (girls) which was unfortunately after several threats, the legal prohibition and other difficulties finally closed. The first school,

⁸ Brown 1-108.

⁹ Sheftall 295.

¹⁰ Sheftall 296.

which was aimed to prepare young black girls for teaching, was opened in 1851 in Washington, DC. ¹¹

Still in the middle of the 19th century, the black people were perceived as enemies of the white population except for the need for their low-paid and unskilled labour. Although there was the possibility for young black women to attend school, only few of them were able to finish their education and to exercise their profession.¹²

The 19th century was also a period of the new view of the upper and middle class white women - “the cult of the lady” or “the cult of true womanhood” which stood on four basic principles – domesticity, submission, piety and purity (according to Barbara Welter’s essay, “*The Cult of True Womanhood 1820 – 1860*”). For the Afro-American women it was impossible to live and keep those principles which made of them inferior and less moral women. The white women who refused to work outside the home were usually replaced by immigrant women. It was quite the paradox because to fulfill the “deal” of the white women, the other women had to leave their homes. The black women were excluded from factories because they were not allowed to work together with the white people and they were forced to do some menial work or to work on galleys. According to the Census in 1847, nearly 50% of the Afro-American women who lived in Philadelphia worked as washerwomen and domestic servants, about 10% worked as needlewomen, 5% did jobs such as hairdressers or dressmakers which could be done in their homes. The black women wanted to prove their place in the American society which led to the attempts of the American Colonization Society to repatriate them back to Africa. That pressure caused the boom of literacy, development and improvement of the Afro-American women.

Later on, the African-American Female Intelligence Society of Boston financially supported the speech of Maria Stewart, a young abolitionist, who articulated new principles of future activities of the Afro-American women and also criticized the free black people for no contribution to their uplift. The speech took place before the audience of men and women in Franklin Hall in Boston and it was a venerable fact because she was the first Afro-American woman to deliver her speech in defence of the women’s rights.¹³

At the end of the Civil War in 1865 the slavery was finally abolished. It meant the emancipation of those slaves who since then had their own rights with some restrictions

¹¹ Flexner 22-37.

¹² Flexner 22-66.

¹³ Giddings 46-55.

although they could not fully assert them in the South. At the same time the black slaves were freed and the women's suffrage attempted to obtain the right to vote. But it seemed to the public that the "black question" was more important than the rights of the white women. On that account, the black women were excluded from the white women's group which tried to fight for their rights. The black women had to depend only on themselves and did not have the same social benefits as the white women. They often had to face assaults and prostitution at a much worse degree. For the black women the task concerning their emancipation was much harder because at first they were forced to fight against the slavery and racism. Then, they could concentrate on the rights of the Afro-American women.¹⁴

During the first years of freedom, the Afro-Americans felt pathetic and they had to face a lot of difficulties. For example, a former owner could seize children of his former servants, despite the objections of parents, to provide better conditions and apprenticeship. More and more black people reaffirmed their marriages and tried to stabilize their lives and secure their families. The male authority was decreasing because men were not able to secure and protect their family enough and women were the last chance to save their families financially - their earnings also provided a capital for black businessmen who tried to find their way to the American market. According to the black men, that fact undermined their manhood. They wanted to reassert their leaders' positions within families and also "liberate" the women from their double duty (which meant that they had a role of a mother, a wife and also a breadwinner) which lowered their role in the society.¹⁵

With the proposal of the 15th Amendment which would provide the black men the right to vote, the black women had to consider whether to support it or not. One part of them (e.g. Sojourner Truth) together with the white feminists thought that it would give men more power which would result in the oppression of women. The other part supported by Francise Ellen Harper agreed that the rights of their men had to be secured before they could assert their women's rights. Ellen Harper's supporters suspected the white feminists of supporting the opposition in order to promote their own interests. With the approving of the 15th Amendment in 1870, the Afro-American women could continue in their own struggle.¹⁶

¹⁴ Flexner 136-269.

¹⁵ Giddings 57-64

¹⁶ Giddings 64-74.

In 1869 the National Colored Labor Union (NCLU) was founded. At the beginning they mostly concentrated on the issues of men but after several objections were made, the NCLU concerned also the issues of women.¹⁷

The year 1878 was the year of another migration of the Afro-American women from the South. They wanted to protect their children, mainly their daughters. The migration caused that they had the “double duty” again. A lot of them were doing quite well even without their husbands who could support them financially. There were also women who were capable of farming or cultivating plantations without any men’s help. Although the black women were busy, they always found time for their “female” activities. For instance, many institutions for aged women of colour were established thanks to their contribution. They were also highly against domestic tyranny which caused that quite a large amount of women refused to get married or have a baby. That was reflected in the fall of the black southern population during the 1870s.¹⁸

In the 19th century several cases of the black people lynching occurred. Most of it was caused by the envy of the white people who were jealous of the success of a number of the Afro-American people. Those Afro-American people owned their own farms or stores which were doing quite well thanks to the high attendance of their “brothers and sisters”. That gave the Afro-American businessmen a partial political power which made a threat to the white people. Anyway, lynching was one of the ways how to get rid of such a threat. The year 1890 was the year in which the southern states tried to deprive the black people of their rights by unfair black codes. The issues of segregation were more and more real and violence against the Afro-American people increased. One of the most famous cases of lynching was the People’s Grocery case in 1892 – the year in which there were more lynchings than in the previous years. The store owner named Moss was lynched after the unsuccessful defence against the white men who tried to destroy his store and also him. Lynching victims were often accused of arson, race prejudice, quarreling with the “superior” race or threatening. That act inspired two Afro-American women who were both close friends of Mr. Moss – Mary Church Terrell and Ida B. Wells Barnett. Mary Church Terrell was a daughter of one of the richest blackmen – Robert Church. She was the president of the Bethel Literary and Historical Society and later on Terrell became the first Afro-American woman to serve on a citywide board and contributed to the foundation of the Washington Colored Women’s League. When Mary Church Terrell heard what had

¹⁷ Giddings 68-74.

¹⁸ Giddings 64-74.

happened to her close friend, she started her fight against lynching together with Ida B. Wells Barnett. Wells Barnett was a journalist and in 1889 the first woman secretary of the National Afro-American Press Association. She personally experienced racism and injustice against the people of her color. Barnett began to write articles on that matter and they were published by all the black newspapers which were highly interested in them. Thanks to the contribution of the other also important Afro-American women (such as Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, Dr. Susan McKinney, Sarah Garnet, Gertrude Mossell etc.), who supported her at a testimonial which was the historical event, Barnett published a booklet called *Southern Horror: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*. Thanks to Ida B. Wells Barnett's campaign against lynchings, a large number of lynchings decreased.¹⁹

As it was mentioned above, the successful Afro-American people were considered to be a threat which resulted in the depression of 1893 when the black communities agglomerated into ghettos which became the fertile soil for drugs, crime and prostitution. The black political power started to decrease and the "white" people began to consider the repealing of the 15th Amendment. While the status of the Afro-American people decreased, the status of the white women rose. That situation agitated the black women and they started to plan the forming of a black women's club in New York City, Brooklyn and Boston. Between the years 1892 and 1894 many clubs were spread throughout the country. Their aim was to improve black women's progress.²⁰

The first feminist analysis about the conditions of the Afro-American women, *A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South*, written by Anna Julia Cooper was published in 1892. The analysis was as broad as a book.²¹

In 1895 the National Federation of Afro-American Women was founded. The Federation united 36 clubs in 12 states and in 1896 merged with the League of Colored Women into the National Association of Colored Women. The first president was Marry Church Terrell. That act meant a watershed in the history of the Afro-American women.²²

The members of that movement were middle-class educated women, most of them were teachers themselves, and they concentrated mainly on education, material progress,

¹⁹ Giddings 18-31.

²⁰ Giddings 78-83.

²¹ Sheftall 301.

²² Sheftall 300.

the important role of home and their role in it, health conditions etc. The club's women also believed that a woman is a man's co-worker and a helpmate and they were equal. Women also should not be forced into traditional roles of mothers and wives. The NACW participated in establishing day nurseries and kindergartens as well because as Terrell said "the real solution of the race problem lied in the children". They wanted to create the opportunity and environment for all the black women. The motto of the National Association of Colored Women was "Lifting as We Climb". They were successful only partially. According to the report of the National Business League, which was established by Booker T. Washington who also helped to sponsor the NACW at its beginning, there were about 160 black female physicians, 7 dentists, 10 lawyers, 164 ministers, 1,185 musicians and teachers of music, 13,525 school instructors etc. at the turn of the century. The increase of the economic achievements enabled the Afro-American women to sponsor the education of children and also to educate teachers of their color. The technical revolution also facilitated the women to earn for living without abandoning the care of their households and also slightly improved the conditions of women who did domestic work.²³

²³ Giddings 95-102.

3. Afro-American Feminism from 1900 to 1960

The beginning of the 20th century was still in the name of the women's struggle (both the black and white women) for their right to vote. There were some exceptions among the white women who were against the suffrage, but those exceptions could not be found among the black women who were supported by many black men.²⁴

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was founded in 1909. It is considered to be one of the most durable interracial civil rights groups.²⁵

In 1913 the first black women suffrage organization, the Alpha Suffrage Club, was founded in Illinois. The Negro women were more aggressive in obtaining their right to vote than the Negro men. The main enemies of the Afro-American women were racist politicians and some white suffragists. The black women were disappointed by the refusal of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) to establish their own branch of the NAWSA. On the contrary, the white women were afraid of losing the power in their fight for the white supremacy in the U.S.A. The suffrage march in 1913 in Washington, D.C. which was organized by the NAWSA should have been segregated but those plans were blasted by Ida B. Wells Barnett who during the march suddenly appeared between two marching white women. At the Southern States Woman Suffrage Conference the white suffragists threatened the southern states in the way that if they do not put the woman-suffrage amendments in their constitutions, they would be forced to work for a federal amendment which would provide the right to vote also for the black women. Then, the Negro women started their own campaigns and special suffrage departments.²⁶

The first decade of the 20th century provided a fertile ground for the spread of the Jim Crow system of segregation. The Jim Crow system began in Tennessee in 1881 when the law allowed the railroads to have the first class for the colored and white separated.²⁷

²⁴ Giddings 135-170.

²⁵ Clayton Carson, "The Second Reconstruction of the South," An African-American Reader-essays on African-American History, Culture and Society, ed. William R. Scott and William G. Shade (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2005)166-179.

²⁶ Giddings 119-131.

²⁷ Armstead L Robinson, "Full of Faith, Full of Hope: African-American Experience from Emancipation to Segregation," An African-American Reader-essays on African-American History, Culture and Society, ed. William R. Scott and William G. Shade (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2005)105-123.

By the year 1916 the National Association of Colored Women, established in 1896, reached several gains. Its most precious contributions were to provide scholarship loans for the black women to enable them to attend college and also to help the southern black women who migrated to the North to find employment through Victoria Earle Matthews's White Rose Mission. Matthew's White Rose Mission was established in 1897 and its main aim was to assist the black women who were migrating from the South.²⁸

In the field of health care, it was the Atlanta Neighborhood Union, founded in 1908 by Lugenia Burns Hope, which served to improve the lives of the Afro-American citizens. The contributions of the NACW were highly visible in the achievements of the black women in areas such as theatre, dancing, singing, classical music, literature etc. The black women also succeeded in controlling their lives which meant that they got married later and had fewer children.²⁹

Before the WWI the Afro-American women were excluded from a lot of jobs because of the inflow of the European immigrants. The employers preferred the white female immigrants to the Afro-American women. That caused the movement of the Afro-American women to other fields of work.³⁰

With the entry of the U.S.A. into the First World War, the situation changed. Worse working conditions, inflation and lower wages were the reasons why the Women Wage-Earners Association was formed in Washington, D.C. by Jeanette Carter, Julia F. Coleman and Mary Church Terrell. Its aim was to organize and protect the Afro-American working women but that goal did not meet with the interests of the government who advanced "the work or fight" rule which meant that the citizens who were not either working or fighting in the WWI could be arrested. The Negro women were forced to work even if the contribution of their men fighting in the WWI was high enough to secure them. The black people were migrating again for a better pay, conditions and hope to the North.³¹

That gave rise to alarm because the black labour started to be scarce. The labour agents who enticed the black people to work in the North were often arrested. On the other hand, the WWI brought the Afro-American women the opportunity to do jobs that they

²⁸ Sheftall 300.

²⁹ Giddings 135-142.

³⁰ Gerald Jaynes, "Blacks in the Economy from Reconstruction to WWI," An African-American Reader-essays on African-American History, Culture and Society, ed. William R. Scott and William G. Shade (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2005)124-135.

³¹ Giddings 135-142.

could not do before, for example to work as clerks, stenographers, bookkeepers or work in manufacturing, mechanical industries, pharmacy, bacteriology and so on. Even they could work in areas where there were the obstacles caused by the white women who refused to work together with the black ones. That fated the black women to do the worst jobs under segregated and poor conditions.³²

The end of the WWI in 1918 had the adverse implication for the Afro-Americans. The demobilization together with more and more immigrants, a slowdown of the industry and a higher competition shifted the Afro-Americans to the bottom of their progress line, especially the Afro-American women who were no longer needed in industry and other fields of employment. The conditions got worst with the rising of the “new” Ku Klux Klan. The year 1919 was characterized by the rise of the defiance among the black people, especially among the black students who insisted on taking courses they liked rather than those ones recommended by the government. One of the students was Zora Neale Hurston, another important figure in the women’s movement. On the labour front Mary Church Terrell wanted to unify the Afro-American women workers to create the Colored Women’s Division within the Women’s Bureau of the Department but she was unsuccessful. The black women were excluded from the program of the First International Congress of Working Women (1919) which included the points such as the equal pay for equal work, 44 hour week, social insurance, maternity benefits, job trainings etc. The Negro women were attracted by the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) but finally they realized that it was not as perfect as they imagined. Still there can be found some positives, for instance the black women were included in the program which provided recreational facilities for soldiers and aid for women who were working in the war industry. The program also helped with the financial contribution to the Colored Department established within the YWCA. The black women even tried to organize their own Black YWCA but their proposal was smashed away by the white women, the National Board and by the YWCA.³³

In their struggle for the right to vote, the black women had to compete with the white women who tried to obtain that right only for themselves. For the Afro-American women it was not only the task concerning their feminist demand for equality but also regarding their claim for racial equality.

³² Jaynes 124-135.

³³ Giddings 145-158.

Finally, the 19th Amendment was passed and ratified, but for the black women, especially in the South, it was nearly impossible to call for their right to vote. They had to wait for long hours even to register, they were often harassed and had to pass special “educational tests”. Mary Church Terrell together with some other women provided special programs which should prepare the black women for voting. They also wanted to prove the fact that the black women are interested in voting and asked the Congress to form the investigation committee which would look into violations of the 19th Amendment. In the last point Terrell did not succeed. In 1920 in Atlanta the Council for Interracial Cooperation (CIC) was founded to become an instrument for new interracial organizations. Finally, the white and black women found a common value – their religion which fulfilled the racial gap between the black and white women, at least for a while. In 1921 the Afro-American women organized the Anti-Lynching Crusaders and tried to find supporters among the white women but they again met with a refusal. The Crusaders contributed partially to the decrease of lynching in the years 1924 and 1928. With the postwar development and also ratifying of the 19th Amendment, the Afro-American women’s militancy weakened. The 1920s were in the name of success of white feminists – The Equal Rights Amendment and Birth Control Movement. For the black women the racial equality was still the topic number one.³⁴

The 1920s were also the time of femininity. The young black women started to view feminism as something strange. Their priorities were to care about their looks, to find suitable husbands and to settle down with them. It was the boom of cosmetic businesses and beauticians. The Afro-American women were ashamed of their race and started to use skin lighters and hair straighteners. That gave the opportunity to C. J. Walker (aka Madame Walker) who became the first black woman millionaire thanks to her success in the cosmetic field. That opportunity enabled her to make a contribution to black education and welfare systems, especially the programs which directly provided benefits for the black women.³⁵

The election of the first Afro-American to the Congress in 1928 meant another watershed in the improvement of the Afro-American’s civil rights.³⁶

³⁴ Giddings 171-181.

³⁵ Giddings 185-197.

³⁶ Harvard Sitkoff, The Struggle for Black Equality 1954- 1992 (New York: Hill and Wang, The Noonday Press, 1993) 9.

In the late twenties black feminism appeared again but with much more aggression. For example, in The Universal Negro Improvement Association, the Afro-American women demanded the equal opportunity to occupy any place in the UNIA or anywhere else without being discriminated on the basis of sex. The relations between the black women and men were in tension again.

In 1921 there was the first Negro woman with a PhD. degree. In 1924 Mary McLeod Bethune became a new president of the NACW. During her administration, the NACW obtained several positive gains: the federal antilynching bill, the help for rural women, women in industry, the training possibility of women's clerks and typists, the financial help to set up the first national headquarters of the NACW. She was also a close friend of F. D. Roosevelt's mother and later on of the first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt. In comparison with his mother and wife, F. D. Roosevelt was not an advocate of the Afro-Americans which would approve later on. But Eleanor Roosevelt's positive attitude and help towards the Afro-Americans, especially women, promised a better situation in Roosevelt's second term. The black community gave Roosevelt 76 % of the votes which opened them the way to the administration. It was Bethune's idea to create a new organization which would cover in all black women's organization and that would enable that new organization a better access to federal funds. The NACW felt threatened by that idea.³⁷

The era of the Great Depression in the 1930s endangered the position of the Afro-American women on the job market. The women were still active in their antilynching programs but the black women were not invited in organizations such as the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. F. D. Roosevelt's New Deal provided the help to the Afro-Americans. They were offered jobs in the administrative field and some became federal employees. Roosevelt's administration showed the first thoughts about desegregation of federal cafeterias, rest rooms etc. but the state of surviving discriminations did not change.³⁸

In 1935 Bethune realized her dream about the organization which would be the roof of all black women's organization and found the National Council of Negro Women.

³⁷ Giddings 185-230.

³⁸ Sitkoff 10-13.

She made a contribution to the fact that the Afro-Americans demanded more than “separate but equal”. They wanted to become the part of the mainstream.³⁹

Bethune was also a director of the Negro Division of the National Youth Administration. She together with Aubrey Williams and Eleanor Roosevelt helped to organize the Federal Council of Negro Affairs. Thanks to her, the implementation of special funds was possible. That fund served as a financial help for the black youth who attended colleges. The NCNW also participated in the task of the Jews’ struggle. Bethune was deeply hurt when the War Department did not invite the black women to a conference which concerned the war effort. During the 1930s the black women tried to improve their working conditions. They were supported by the Domestic Workers Union, the National Congress and also by the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union. The possibility of the improvement success was on the arm’s length because the black women created a great percentage of workers in tobacco industry, steel industry etc. Finally, that chance disappeared thanks to the Unions which excluded the Afro-American women who had to face sexist attitudes and also ambivalent civil rights leaders.⁴⁰

Again, with the entry of the United States in 1941 into the Second World War, the attitude towards the women and also black women changed. They were useful as needed work labour in naval yards, weapon factories, communications equipment lines and so on. On the contrary, the black women had much harder conditions. At first, they had to wait until the white women had their jobs before they could have demanded for theirs. The Afro-Americans, both the men and women lost their patience.⁴¹

Philip Randolph came up with the idea of the March on Washington. The result of that action was the Executive Order 8802 in 1941 which prohibited discrimination in hiring workers in nation’s defense industries, other war related work or in government contracts on the bases of race, creed, color or national origin. The Federal Employment Practices Commission was established to oversee the validity of that Order.⁴²

It provided the black women at least small chances to employment. Step by step, the Afro-American women were reaching their success in the working field – more working opportunities even in professional or semiprofessional work or armed services, a

³⁹ Giddings 210-215.

⁴⁰ Giddings 200-236.

⁴¹ Blance Linden-Ward and Carol Hurd Green, American Women in the 1960s Changing the Future (New York: Twayne Publisher, 1993) xii.

⁴² Sitkoff 11-12.

better pay and eventually more black women were entering the Unions. The gains of the WWII in the field of economy partially muted the black militancy. In the coming era of producing manufactured goods after the WWII, work labour of the Afro-Americans and mainly women was demanded. According to Ralph Ellison, the harmony between the Americans and the Afro-Americans was good for the economic development and that was what the national industries were looking for. The attempts to build the interracial cooperation were already set up in 1944 when the black and white southerners established the Southern Regional Council which had a positive impact on lynching and the improvement of interracial goodwill. That time also brought changes in the claims of the Afro-American people. The babyboom of the postwar years also touched the black women. Also “separate but equal” was no longer acceptable, the Afro-Americans wanted to become a part of the American society and to integrate into the mainstream. The economic progress and consumerism also left some negative effects on the Afro-American heritage.⁴³

In the late 1940s the situation of the black organizations worsened. The NAACP lost many of its members and Mary McLeod Bethune resigned from the National Council of Negro Women. The Afro-Americans were shocked by the death of Mary Church Terrell in 1954. One year later Mary McLeod Bethune died as well.⁴⁴

In the 1950s the “cult of true womanhood” became popular among the American women again. The traditional values were followed. A lot of women dropped out of colleges and professional work. The white women saw their fulfillment in becoming homemakers.⁴⁵

In addition to that, the black women saw the development as their opportunity. Already in the 1940s and 1950s, the Afro-American women succeeded in the fields such as dancing, singing, film and also writing. Thanks to the “cult of true womanhood”, a high rate of the Afro-American women were enabled to attend colleges and practise professions. Such improvement gave rise to tension between the black men and women. The racial militancy calmed down. One of the reasons was the increase of the material ethos and also the “Red Scare”. For instance, Mary McLeod Bethune was investigated by the FBI in 1942

⁴³ Giddings 231-243.

⁴⁴ Giddings 249-258

⁴⁵ Linden-Ward x-xii.

in connection with the disloyalty to the government and accusation of being a communist.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Giddings 243-249.

4. The 1960s and After

The development of Afro-American feminism was highly influenced by the revolutionary 1960s. The Afro-American women together with the Afro-American men united in their struggle for equality. That was also the reason why the black women's movements were pushed aside for a while. The events of the 1960s contributed to the improvement of the Afro-American citizens and other minorities. The black women together with the white women shared values as the equal pay, better working conditions and equal working opportunities. Tactics used by the Afro-Americans during the 1960s were predominantly non violent.⁴⁷

In 1960 segregation was everywhere – in hospitals, schools, public accommodations, work, parks, cemeteries, telephone booths etc. The NAACP demanded justice in courts for the Afro-Americans, education for their children, total equality before the law and also employment according to their abilities rather than their color.⁴⁸

A significant breakthrough in the development of the struggle for desegregation was the case of Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education in 1954 which signalled a possible change and encouraged civil rights supporters. The case Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education was sponsored by the NAACP.⁴⁹

Another step was made by Rosa Parks in 1955, a civil rights activist, who refused to let a white man to have her seat even in that time when segregation in bus transportation and in other places was still valid. She was arrested. Parks was a perfect person for that act because she was intelligent, dignified and a respectable married black woman. That incident led to bus boycotting which should have lasted only one day at first, but in the end it lasted over a year.

⁴⁷ Giddings 262-275.

⁴⁸ Sitkoff 1-36.

⁴⁹ Wilson J. Moses, "From Booker T. until after Malcolm X: Black Political Thought 1895- 1995," An African-American Reader-essays on African-American History, Culture and Society, ed. William R. Scott and William G.Shade (Washington, D.C.:Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2005)147-155.

All the Afro-American people refused to use buses as a means of transport which irritated the runners of transportation companies whose incomes decreased. People were threatened and there were several cases of physical abusing.⁵⁰

In 1957 the biggest demonstration concerning the civil rights issues was The Prayer Pilgrimage which took place in Washington, D.C. Black parents wanted to integrate their children into predominantly white children's schools and they often met with disagreement.⁵¹

The Little Rock Central High School case is also known where in the end the troops were protecting Afro-American teenage girls on their way to school.⁵²

On 1st February, 1960 four black students from A&T State University in North Carolina, who no longer wanted to accept the fact that they were separated even in a catering establishment, refused to leave tables intended for white citizens. They demanded to be served. Of course, any waiter did not risk serving that group. Then, the time of popular "Sit-ins" started. The favourers of the "Sit-ins" asked Dr. George Simkins (who was the president of the local NAACP) for help. The following week the "Sit-ins" widened across the South and by and by they took place in the North. The startling fact was that white students joined the "Sit-ins" rituals. The first city that integrated its catering establishment was San Antonio which was soon followed by 4 national chains who provided catering services in 112 cities. Ella Baker (a civil rights activist) was aware of the power of the "Sit-ins" movement but she was also well informed about the movement demerit which was the lack of coordination. With the contribution of the SCLC and thanks to Baker's help, the Student Nonviolent Coordinatin Committee was established.⁵³

The SNCC had two divisions: The Direct Action Projects and Voter Registration. Those "Sit-ins" were enriched with the "Do not buy where you can't eat" campaign. Later on, the "Sit-ins" did not concentrate only on catering establishments but also enlarged into churches, pools, libraries, motels, museums etc.⁵⁴

The organizations that highly influenced the civil rights movement were the SNCC, which was already mentioned above, and the SCLC. The SNCC's main goals were the voter registration and dissegregated schools. The major part of the SNCC members was

⁵⁰ Linden-Ward 30-32.

⁵¹ Giddings 269-270.

⁵² Carson 166-179.

⁵³ Linden-Ward 32-38.

⁵⁴ Sitkoff 65-87.

women who contributed to make those organizations most dynamic and progressive in the sixties. The members of the SNCC used the “jail, no bail” strategy which meant that the members who were arrested during demonstrations refused to be bailed out from the jail because it was very expensive to bail out every demonstrating participant. Also that kind of the strategy should have attracted the public.⁵⁵

The SNCC and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) were also responsible for the Freedom Rides which supported the racial desegregation in public transportation and which also tested the abidance of the law from 1964 which prohibited segregation in vehicles in the interstate travel system. People who participated in the Freedom Rides were often forced to leave the bus and then were severely beaten. The leaders of the Freedom Rides were threatened with losing their jobs if they did not stop those Rides. The Freedom Rides continued until 1961 when the Interstate Commerce Commission abolished the racial discrimination in the interstate transportation.⁵⁶

In 1962 the Cambridge movement with its leader, Gloria Richardson, tried to intervene in the field of the segregation of public accommodations.⁵⁷

In 1963 the Equal Pay Right was signed by J. F. Kennedy which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex. It was the first federal law referring to sex discrimination. The law said that in certain areas women who had the same work as their male colleagues must be paid the same wages.⁵⁸

In 1964 the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project started. The project tried to register as many black voters as it could. The public was shocked when 3 members of the Mississippi Summer Project (two were white and one black) were killed during their investigation of the burning of the church in Neskoba County. Even the FBI was involved in that case. The Afro-Americans ended their non violent tactics and since 1965 they have begun to use armed protection.⁵⁹

The year 1963 was famous for the March on Washington and Martin Luther King’s, Jr.’s Speech, *I have a dream*. The March on Washington should have given the Afro-Americans the opportunity to express their disagreement with the existing situation.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Giddings 261-297.

⁵⁶ Sitkoff 88-104.

⁵⁷ Giddings 290-292.

⁵⁸ Linden-Ward 9.

⁵⁹ Sitkoff 88-117.

⁶⁰ Carson 166-179.

Martin Luther King, as other male civil rights leaders, made a contradictory impression on the black women from the women's movements. It was visible in the preparation of the March on Washington. Until the last minute of the preparation, there were no black women on the list. In the end, some black women were picked up (e.g. Gloria Richardson, Drane Nash Bevel or Herbert Lee) to represent the Afro-American women's movements. Only one month later, the bombing of the Birmingham's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, during which 4 children were killed, occurred and the vision of the racial harmony disappeared. The black organizations realized that the non violent tactics was no longer sufficient. The SNCC also started to offer memberships to the white people.⁶¹

There were dramatic tensions between the Afro-American and white women in 1964 and 1965 due to sexual relationships between the white women and the Afro-American men. The Afro-American women were unable to put up with the special treatment of the white women. The tensions led to the exclusion of the white members from the SNCC in 1966. In 1964 the Civil Rights Act and in 1965 the Voting Rights Act were passed during Johnson's administration.⁶²

The Civil Rights Act in 1964 prohibited discrimination in most places of public accommodations, authorized the government to withhold federal funds to public programs practising discrimination and banned discrimination by employers and unions. The Civil Rights Act did not concentrate only on discrimination of the Afro-Americans but also on discrimination of women and nonblack minorities. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and Community Relations Service were established to provide technical and financial aids to communities desegregating their schools. During the year 1965 three Marches from Selma to Montgomery were organized and they led to the passing of the Voting Rights Act. The Voting Rights Act offered federal investigators who registered qualified voters and banned obstructions of discrimination such as literacy tests etc. The Voting Rights Act was renewed in 1970.⁶³

⁶¹ Giddings 311- 324.

⁶² Linden-Ward 49-59.

⁶³ Sitkoff 210-235.

The entry of the United States of America into the Vietnam War and also the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. definitively buried hopes of the Afro-Americans for better lives.⁶⁴

The white feminists were accused of using the black organization for their improvement without any significant contribution to the black women. The white women were claimed to profit from the benefits which were fought out by the Afro-American women. For the white women the main enemies were the white men in contrast to the black women who were highly perceptive concerning the issue of the unity between the black women and black men. The Afro-American females also realized the impossibility to cooperate with the white women due to increasing differences between their needs and the needs of the white women.⁶⁵

The period of the 1960s brought a tension between the black men and women. Men's desire to be a breadwinner together with male revolt, sexist outburst strengthened by the invention of Playboy magazine and the women engaged in the work force led to the abandonment of family responsibilities and runaways of men from households. After 1964 and the break down of the civil rights movement, the desperate need of the black men to assert themselves caused that the black women in the civil rights movement were pushed into backgrounds. The men saw the enemy in the women who wanted to steal their manhood. The Afro-American men often ended up in the arms of those white women who were symbols of their freedom. All the facts encouraged the Afro-American women to take action. The Labor Department came up with the document called "*The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*" which was also known as the Moynihan Report and should have helped in Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty.

According to that document, all problems of the Afro-Americans were caused by the success of the Afro-American women. The report as well recommended that the government should provide jobs for the black men although it would cost the black women's jobs. The question of the women's union started to be acute. The Moynihan Report caused uproar and was stamped as sexist because the situation in black families was pretty the same as in white ones.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Linden-Ward xvi.

⁶⁵ Giddings

⁶⁶ John F. Baumann, "The New Underclass Concentrated Poverty in the Post-industrial City," An African-American Reader-essays on African-American History, Culture and Society, ed. William R. Scott and William G. Shade (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2005) 261-273.

After 1967 the black women stopped using hair straighteners and skin bleaches, tried to highlight their natural beauty and affirmed their own style in fashion, music, food and culture.⁶⁷

The struggle of the Afro-American feminists was on its rise partially because of the “failure” of the Civil Rights Movement. The Afro-American women were shocked by the sexist behaviour of the Afro-American men in such organizations.⁶⁸

The National Organization for Women was interested in creating a coalition with the important black women. The NOW wanted to be something like the NAACP’s version for women to supervise the observance of the Civil Rights Act. But that intention was not realized. The NOW could not find the way how to satisfy the needs of the Afro-American women. The NOW achieved quite a huge increase in its members in the 1960s and in 1970 it reached its most successful time which was connected with the 5th anniversary of the 19th Amendment. During the 1970s the gap between the NOW and other minorities broadened.⁶⁹

In 1971 the National Women’s Political Caucus was founded to enable more women to be elected and appointed to public offices. The main figures were Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan and Shirley Chisholm. The presidential campaign of 1972 and the candidacy of Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman to be elected to the Congress, meant a shift on the scale of gains for the Afro-American women. However, her campaign did not have much sufficient financial support and was also disorganized. She did not receive the support of the black leaders because in the attempt of the Afro-Americans to reach higher political offices, they preferred a man to a woman. Shirley Chisholm was disappointed with such a pose.⁷⁰

In 1972 the Equal Employment Opportunity Act was adopted by the Congress. During the 70s the Afro-American female writers started to be awake. From the most

⁶⁷ Sitkoff 153-183.

⁶⁸ Sheftall 303.

⁶⁹ Giddings 299-324.

⁷⁰ Giddings 337-340.

valuable works we can name Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Shirley Chisholm's *Unbossed and Unbossed*, later on Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*.⁷¹

The black movements positively influenced the development of the white feminist movements. The feminists were much more successful in their goals when the issues of the Afro-Americans attracted the attention of the Americans. The failure of the Equal Right Amendment to be implemented into the Constitution was caused by the "Stop ERA" campaign which was conducted by the antifeminists who considered the ERA as a threat to family backgrounds and also to femininity.⁷²

The National Black Feminist Organization was created in 1973 and its demands were political, social and economic equality for black women. The organization emerged from the gathering of black female lawyers, welfare rights workers, housewives etc. in 1973. Those women were dissatisfied with the present feminist movements which according to them promoted only the needs of the white women. The members of the NBFO were Margaret Sloan (the president of the NBFO), Alice Walker, Shirley Chisholm, Eleanor Holmes Norton and Flo Kennedy. The NBFO set up workshops which focused on the issues of child care, the church, welfare, education, lesbianism, work, domestic violence and so on. However, the National Black Feminist Organization was not able to survive because of its insufficient financial resources and inadequate staff. The fact that it did not manage to attract more black women was also the reason why the NBFO ended.⁷³

In the early 70s political black lesbian groups emerged, e.g. The Combahee River Collective. The Combahee River Collective was the first organization which openly discussed the homophobia within the black community and provided help for the Afro-American women with a different sexual orientation.⁷⁴

Despite the increase of the income of the Afro-American women, they still had lower incomes than the other groups and it was often an Afro-American female-headed household who had to face the absolute poverty. That was also a reason why the Afro-

⁷¹ Donald G. Norman, "After the Movement: African Americans and Civil Rights since 1970," An African-American Reader-essays on African-American History, Culture and Society, ed. William R. Scott and William G. Shade (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2005) 261-273.

⁷² Giddings 340-348.

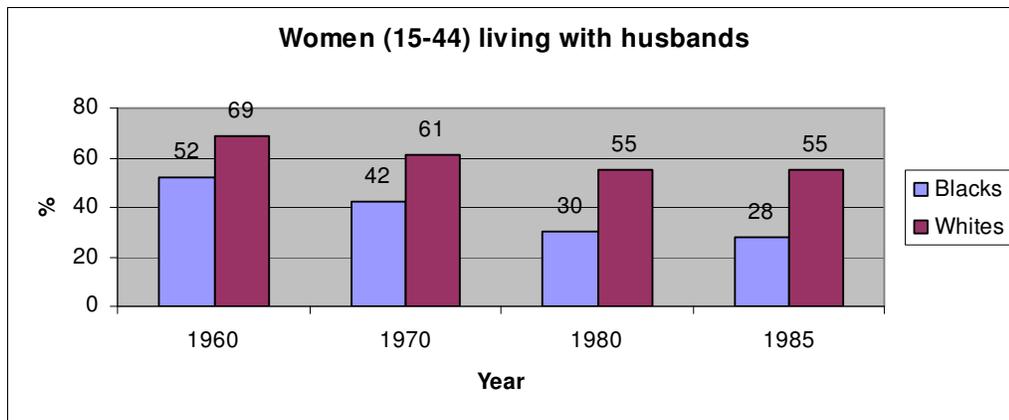
⁷³ Sheftall 304.

⁷⁴ Giddings 344.

American women (the NCNW, the Labor Union Movement, the United Methodist Church etc.) supported the ERA and other projects concerning the women's rights.⁷⁵

In the 1980s the black women were again at the bottom. The civil rights gains which had been fought out during the 60s were ignored, tensions in black families and communities re-appeared and the white feminist organization refused to hear the needs of the Afro-American women. The black families had lower incomes than the white families. The black women were earning less than the white women (exceptions were the black women in professions) and there were a lot of female-headed black families. The black assertiveness also endangered relationships between the Blacks and Whites. The Coalition of Labor Union Women dealt with the discrimination within the Unions and tried to organize women workers. During the 80s the coalition between the black and white women was much more possible because both the black and white women were experiencing many of the same dislocations such as female-headed families, out of wedlock births, divorce rates etc. although the white women were still in a better situation than the black women as you can see in the graphs below.⁷⁶

Graph 1



Source: Walter B. Allen: African-American Family Life in Societal Context: Crisis and Hope⁷⁷

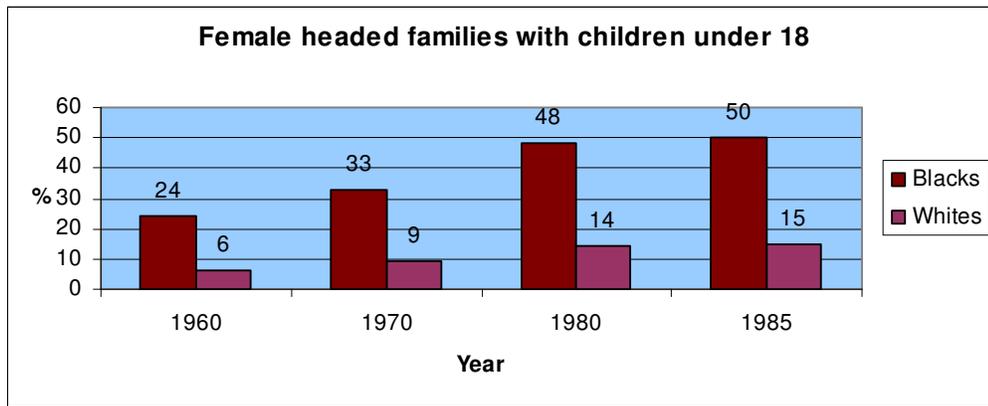
Concerning Graph 1, the number of black women (15-44) decreased from 52% in 1960 to 28% in 1985. In 1985 the number of the white women (15-44) living with their husbands was twice higher than the number of black women (15-44) living with theirs.

⁷⁵Giddings 340- 348.

⁷⁶Giddings 349-357.

⁷⁷Walter B. Allen, "African-American Family Life in Societal Context: Crisis and Hope," *An African-American Reader-essays on African-American History, Culture and Society*, ed. William R. Scott and William G. Shade (Washington, D.C.:Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2005)291.

Graph 2



Source: Walter B. Allen: *African-American Family Life in Societal Context: Crisis and Hope*⁷⁸

Graph 2 shows the development of the female headed families with children under 18. The number of the black female headed families was 24% in 1960. In 1985 it was already 50% which was relatively high in comparison with 15% of the white female headed families.

⁷⁸ Allen 291.

5. The 1980s and After, Black feminism and Womanism

The Afro-American women often had a great dilemma. They had to decide whether to concentrate on the struggle for their race liberation or on the struggle for their gender liberation. To choose one usually meant to be rejected by the supporters of the other group.

According to Patricia Hill Collins' book, *Black Feminist Thought*, the Afro-American women's exclusion from the white feminist organization, black male society and also mainstream scholarship put them aside which as Alice Walker experienced in the way they were enabled to see the true reality. There are several definitions of the term *feminist*. In Scott's book called "*Selected Bibliography on Black Feminism*" it is explained that all the Afro-American women are the black feminists. Another definition says that the black feminists are also the Afro-Americans – primarily women who own some kind of feminist consciousness. Beverly Guy-Sheftall claimed that both the Afro-American men and women can be black feminists. But the black women have to face both racial and gender oppression in comparison to the black men who have to face up to "only" racial oppression and to the white women who struggle with gender oppression. The differentiated Afro-American women's needs and problems also shaped their goals. Another definition describes a feminist as anyone who supports or agrees with black feminist ideas.⁷⁹

Also the definition of the term *black feminism* is quite interesting. The majority of the US citizens describes feminism as women's liberation. Its main aim is to reach the social equality with men. However, black feminism certainly differs from white feminism. The black women were aware of the fact that their men did not share the same social status with the white men and that the situation among the women (black and white) was the same. For the Afro-American women the eradication of domination and elitism were the main goals.⁸⁰

During the 1980s many Afro-American women no longer considered themselves to be black feminists but to be womanists. They felt the need to be different from the mainstream feminists.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (London: Harper Collins Academic, 1991)1-35.

⁸⁰ Bell Hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press, 2000) 18-33.

⁸¹ Sheftall 306.

Some Afro-American women refused to use the term *feminism* for several reasons. The part of them considered feminism to be determined only for white feminists. In the essay called *What the Black Woman Thinks about Women's Lib* written by Toni Morrison, the author compares the white women to “willful children, pretty children, mean children who would never be real adults capable of handling the real problems of the world”. Some Afro-American women did not want to use that because they were unsure of its meaning. From another point of view, *feminism* was said to be connected with lesbianism which was for the Afro-American women, for whom the religion was essential, unacceptable.⁸²

According to the research which was conducted among 15 Afro-American women, the women were speaking about the term *feminism* as the term relating to the white women. They also did not consider themselves as feminists and did not speak about themselves as about victims. They saw their potential to achieve their goals. Those questioned women also mentioned that they were had been supported by other Afro-American women throughout their lives and most of them also had experienced support from black men.⁸³

The anti-male sentiments among the white feminists caused the disagreement of the black women with the white feminists. The black women found out that they shared similar values with the black men rather than with the white women. The Afro-Americans were united in their struggle.⁸⁴

More and more Afro-American women are attached to the term *womanism* instead of *feminism*. That term first appeared in the essay, *In Search of Our Mother's Garden*, written by Alice Walker.

The term of *womanism* was derived from the word of womanish which was often used by the Afro-American mothers. To act womanish means to act “in outrageous, courageous, and willful ways that freed them from the conventions of long limiting white women”. She herself describes a womanist as a black feminist or a feminist of color and states that “womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender”.

⁸² Hooks 18-33.

⁸³Wallace Gail, “A Research Brief: Exploring Black Feminist Consciousness in the Lives of 15 African-American Women,” *Race, gender & class* 16.1/2(2009) 282-288, EBSCOhost, Web, 27 April 2010 <<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&hid=12&sid=5e9ccbc1-68be-4f0b-bdd3-2ec97dc50b06%40sessionmgr11>>.

⁸⁴ Hooks 68-71.

According to Walker, womanism also makes a way how to improve or strengthen the relationship between the Afro-American women and Afro-American men in comparison to the white feminists who do not count on men's participation in their struggle. Sherley Williams claims that womanism unables the Afro-American women to fight with gender oppression without attacking the black men. Although a big part of the Afro-American women preferred the term *womanism*, there is still a number of women who accept the term *black feminism*. Adding the word of "black", it attacks the "whiteness" of the term feminism and challenges the false meaning of the word. Some black supporters suggest that black feminism is a universal term as for the white and black women together. In contrast to womanism, black feminism is only for the Afro-American women. The female supporters of black feminism reject the participation of the Afro-American men.⁸⁵

In a questionnaire among black and white women, the black women identified themselves strongly with the womanist model by comparison with the white women who rather supported the (white) feminist model. The black women claimed that "the womanist model better differentiated between stages of identity development than did the feminist model for black women".⁸⁶

The 1980s were also a period of several Afro-American women's achievements. For example, in 1983 the first black women became Miss America of 1984, however, few months later she had to resign because of some scandal photos.⁸⁷

In 1984 Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press was founded to publish mainly works of colored writers included Alice Walker, Barbara Smith etc.⁸⁸

The period of the 1980s is also known for the scandal of Thomas versus Hill. The Afro-American womanists criticised the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. Before the nomination, Thomas, the Afro-American, was accused of sexual

⁸⁵ Patricia Hill Collins, "What's in a Name? Womanism, Black Feminism, and Beyond," Black Scholar 26.1(Winter/Spring 1996) 9-17,EBSCOhost,Web, 27 April 2010
<<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&hid=9&sid=7571d3fa-c1a2-4f4f-b2f6-2320e2b5f102%40sessionmgr12>>.

⁸⁶ Alicia D. Boisnier, "Race and Women's Identity Development: Distinguishing Between Feminism and Womanism Among Black and White Women," Sex Roles 49. 5/6(September 2003) 211-218,EBSCOhost, Web, 27April 2010
<<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&hid=9&sid=651d2289-8efa-4cd0-96f1-ba86d26b96f9%40sessionmgr14>>.

⁸⁷ Giddings 354.

⁸⁸ Sheftall 306.

harassment of the Afro-American woman, Anita Hill, who worked as an assistant to the chairman Thomas at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.⁸⁹

Some Afro-American women criticised Anita Hill. According to them, “she should have kept her mouth shut” because “black women will support black men, no matter what”. However, other Afro-American women urged females not to be silent in the case of sexual or other abuses.⁹⁰

During the 1980s the interest in black women’s studies spread over colleges and universities. This period is also known as the rise of several priceless Afro-American women writers such as Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor and so on, who through their works and other alternative ways (e.g. music) expressed black women’s experience and thoughts. On the other hand, the period of the 1980s was not so welcoming for the Afro-Americans. Most of them lived on the edge of poverty and in 1985 half of the female headed black families lived below the poverty line (as it was mentioned in the previous chapter). The following year the situation got worse. The amount of the female headed black families who lived below the poverty line increased to 86%. There was also a higher increase in teenage parents.⁹¹

Concerning the importance of women’s friendship among the black people, the friendship was and still is really valuable to the Afro-American women. They affirmed each other, supported themselves and also shaped their thoughts through discussions over their experience and stories. The examples of such friendships can be seen in Toni Morrison’s *Sula*, *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*.⁹²

The black women also highlighted the value of sisterhood which was impossible to attain because of a different social status, different needs or goals which separated the black women from the white women. Also several white women would never accept the

⁸⁹ Robert Gregg, “From Black Bourgeoisie to African-American Middle Class and Back, 1957 to the Present,” And African-American Reader-essays on African-American History, Culture and Society, ed. William R. Scott and William G. Shade (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 2005)248-260.

⁹⁰ Patricia Hill Collins, “What’s in a Name? Womanism, Black Feminism, and Beyond,” Black Scholar 26.1 (Winter/Spring 1996) 9-17 ,EBSCOhost, Web. 27 April 2010
<<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&hid=9&sid=7571d3fa-c1a2-4f4f-b2f6-2320e2b5f102%40sessionmgr12>>.

⁹¹ Collins 35; 64.

⁹² Collins 96-99.

sisterhood due to their maintained supremacy although in their theories they stressed the equality.⁹³

The Afro-American women did not have to fight only against the physical abuse from the white men but also against the abuse from their environment (fathers, brothers, uncles, neighbors etc.).⁹⁴

Bell Hooks sees the problem of black men's violence against the black women in frustration of the black men who did not achieve the power as they were taught they should have possessed. So, the domination over the black women obtained by the violent way was their only satisfaction. Hooks also speaks about the cycle of violence which starts at black man's work where he is humiliated and continued at home. Home is the only place where the black man can get rid of his frustration, aggression and anger.⁹⁵

The author of the article, *Feminism Versus Minority Group Identity: Not for Black Woman Only*, Pamela Trotman Reid, informs that there are several hypotheses concerning black feminism.

According to the first hypothesis, the black women will threaten the feminist movement due to their concern with racism. The white feminists think that the Afro-American women will prefer the task referring to racial oppression to the task of gender oppression.

The second hypothesis describes the black women as women with a dual identity who profitted from that fact. Some researchers even believe in "reverse racism" and claimed that the black women earn more money than the white women and overestimate the black women's economic and professional opportunities.

The third hypothesis represents black matriarchy. According to it, the Afro-American women are treated better than the Afro-American men (a dominant position in families etc.) and that they even hinder the Afro-American men from their progress.

The last hypothesis provides the theory that sexism of the Afro-American women is the reason why the Afro-American women are oppressed. However, critics of the hypothesis stress the fact that the role of the Afro-American woman is much more accepted

⁹³ Hooks 64-67.

⁹⁴ Collins 177-179.

⁹⁵ Hooks 75-124.

among the Afro-Americans than the acceptance of the role of the white women among the Whites.

As the author suggests the black women are more supportive of “efforts to strengthen or change women’s status than white women”. She also agreed with the statement mentioned above that the Afro-American women refuse the membership and cooperation with the (white) feminist organization due to basic social inequalities between social/racial groups and also because of the disagreement of some white women to accept the black women in their organization.⁹⁶

In the 1990s G. W. Bush vetoed a bill concerning the civil rights. In 1992 the case of Rodney King who was intentionally beaten by two white police officers caused uproar in public. The racial hostility started to rise again.⁹⁷ Other obstacles appeared in the lives of the Afro-Americans and the Afro-American women again have a dilemma whether to struggle for racial or gender liberation. We can only guess what they will choose at this time and which “weapons” they will use.

⁹⁶ Pamela Trotman Reid, “Feminism Versus Minority Group Identity: Not for Black Woman Only,” Sex roles 10.3/4 (1984) 247-255, EBSCOhost, Web, 27 April 2010 <<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&hid=107&sid=6c896a65-ad30-4c0a-9538-a9d3b5aaab85%40sessionmgr111>>.

⁹⁷ Sitkoff 210-235.

6. Conclusion

The development of Afro-American feminism was not as fast as the development of “white” feminism. The Afro-American women had to face so called double jeopardy. Apart from that, there were the women who were also black. That fact made many obstacles in their struggle. They were often caught in the situation when they had to decide whether to prefer the struggle for racial “equality” or gender “equality”.

The Afro-American women were strongly influenced by two groups: the Afro-American men and the white women. Whether they were “up” or “down”, the Afro-American men were always (except for some periods of tensions) a durable support to them and the Afro-Americans highly appreciated that truth.

However, the relationship between the Afro-American women and the white women was not so clear. Although the Afro-American women were precious allies, some white women could not get over racial differences and they often preferred their own interests to interests of the Afro-American women. They were not able to get rid of their white supremacy. They also could not accept the fact that the issues concerning the rights of the Afro-Americans were sometimes more important for the public than the issues concerning the white women’s suffrage. That is the reason why the Afro-American women were often excluded from the white feminist movements. The situation also got worse when the Afro-American men tried to find their freedom and their “lost” manhood in the arms of the white women. Nevertheless, during the development of Afro-American feminism a measurable progress was made in the relationship between the black and white women.

The friendship was highly valuable for the Afro-American women and it helped them to share and discuss their ideas. Thanks to it, they were later on able to create their own organizations. The Afro-American women also tried to create the friendship with the white women, but despite all the efforts of both the Afro-American women and white women, that desire was never fulfilled. The friendship is also the main theme in works of Afro-American women writers.

The black women also made several priceless contributions in the fight against lynching. Two most important persons were Mary Church Terrell and Ida B. Wells Barnett.

Another thing which also changed during the development of Afro-American feminism was the strategy. During the 19th century, the Afro-American women together with the Afro-American men were fighting for the abolition of slavery. After the abolition the interests of the Afro-American men and women separated. The need of the Afro-American men to get their right to vote became the topic number one which was unacceptable for some black feminists. Still and all, the majority of the Afro-American women were aware of the importance of their men's demand and finally they supported the Afro-American men in their struggle.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Afro-American women together with the white feminists concentrated on their own right to vote. Many tensions re-appeared because the white feminists wanted to gain the right to vote only for themselves. After the 19th Amendment was passed, another fight started. The Afro-American women realized that despite all their efforts, they could not apply their right to vote. There was a small number of the Afro-American women who succeeded. However, they had to fight with many obstacles such as educational tests etc.

During the 20th century the number of goals and interests in their agenda increased. The First World War and later on the Second World War enabled the Afro-American women to do the jobs which were intended for the white women. Although the working opportunities increased, the working conditions were still poor. The Afro-American women tried to join the Unions, but it lasted several years before they became full members of the Unions. The Afro-Americans started to concentrate also on the issues concerning living and social conditions. Thanks to their efforts, many kindergartens and nursing homes were founded.

In the revolutionary 1960s, the needs of the Afro-American women were put aside for a while. The Afro-American women united with the Afro-American men in their fight against the racial segregation. The popular "Sit-ins" and Freedom Rides also attracted the white citizens of the United States and they also started to participate in the civil rights movement. Although several valuable gains were reached, there were still some unsolved issues.

The 1980s was the period when the Afro-American feminists felt the need to differentiate themselves from the white feminists. A part of them considered themselves as the black feminists. The others started to use the term womanism which was invented by

Alice Walker. Womanism lays stress on the participation with the Afro-American men in comparison with black feminism which does not count on men's participation.

To sum it up, in each period of the existence of the Afro-American women in the United States there were always some obstacles which unabled them to live normal and adequate life. Maybe, the 21st century will finally provide some ways how to meet with their unfulfilled demands.

Resumé

Tématem mé bakalářské práce je afroamerický feminismus. Cílem mé bakalářské práce bylo vytvořit stručného průvodce vývojem tohoto hnutí. Jelikož rozvoj afroamerického feminismu je úzce spojen s vývojem postavení a práv Afroameričanů samotných, zmiňuji ve své práci i nejdůležitější historické mezníky, které se týkají Afroameričanů jako celku.

Dalším faktorem, který ovlivňoval vývoj afroamerického feminismu, je feminismus tzv. klasický, potažmo bělošský. Afroamerické ženy přispěly k mnoha významným vítězstvím - jak afroamerického feminismu, tak i feminismu klasického. Je zajímavé, že obvykle, když byl klasický feminismus na svém vrcholu, tak naopak afroamerický feminismus za ním výrazně zaostával. I přes veškerou snahu se afroamerickým ženám nepodařilo navázat plnohodnotné spojení s ostatními americkými ženami, zejména s bělošskými feministkami. Většina amerických žen se soustředila pouze na své zájmy a cíle a také nebyla schopna přijmout fakt, že zájmy Afroameričanů byly v některých obdobích upřednostňovány před jejich zájmy. Dalším důvodem neúspěšné spolupráce byla neochota vzdát se své nadřazenosti vůči afroamerickým ženám. To bylo také důvodem, proč afroamerické ženy nebyly přijímány do spolků a organizací feminismu klasického.

Afroamerické ženy musely čelit dvojí diskriminaci. Byly diskriminovány kvůli barvě své pleti a zároveň byly diskriminovány kvůli pohlaví. Často proto musely čelit rozhodnutí, zda podpořit boj za rasovou rovnoprávnost, anebo se zaměřit pouze na rovnoprávnost pohlaví. Narozdíl od bělošských feministek, afroamerické ženy nikdy nepovažovaly své muže za hlavního nepřítele. Z vývoje afroamerického feminismu je také znatelná vzájemná podpora mezi afroamerickými muži a ženami.

Za počátky historie Afroameričanů ve Spojených státech můžeme považovat období, kdy byli tito Afroameričané dopravováni do Států na lodích za naprosto otřesných a nelidských podmínek. Tito budoucí otroci měli nahradit pracovní sílu při osidlování amerického kontinentu. Afroamerické ženy byly často také používány jako "výrobna" dalších otroků, což také přispělo k tomu, že začaly používat různé prostředky a způsoby, kterými chtěly zabránit těhotenství. I po zrušení otroctví nemohli nadále Afroameričané na jihu platňovat svá práva. Afroamerické ženy na tom byly ještě hůře. V následujícím období musely také čelit závažnému rozhodnutí, zda podpořit své muže v boji o volební právo.

I přes námitky některých bělošských feministek se rozhodly, že nakonec své muže podpoří. Tím, že muži získají volební právo, afroamerické ženy se budou moci spolu s bělošskými feministkami plně věnovat svému vlastnímu boji za volební právo.

Dvacátá léta 20. století byla ve znamení boje afroamerických i bělošských žen za jejich vlastní volební právo. Mezi oběma odvětvími feminismu panovalo napětí, protože bělošské feministky se nechtěly vzdát své nadřazenosti nad afroamerickými ženami. Nakonec se podařilo oběma skupinám volební právo získat. Ovšem, ačkoliv afroamerické ženy měly ze zákona zaručeno volební právo, jen malé hrstce z nich se podařilo toto právo využít. Afroamerické ženy byly během volební registrace zastrašovány. Musely čekat několik dnů na samotné zaevidování a dokonce byly nuceny podstupovat testy, které měly dokázat, že jsou vzdělané natolik, aby mohly volit.

Vstup Spojených států do 1. světové a následně 2. světové války poskytl afroamerickým ženám alespoň částečnou možnost získat pracovní místa, která jim byla vždy odpírána. Ačkoliv počet pracovních příležitostí vzrostl, pracovní podmínky pro afroamerické ženy byly i nadále otřesné. Afroamerické ženy se proto snažily najít si cestu do odborů. Několik let trvalo, než se mohly stát plnohodnotnými členkami těchto odborů. Afroamerické ženy se také kromě pracovních podmínek soustředily i na podmínky sociální a podmínky životní. Mnoho školek a pečovatelských domů bylo zřízeno díky jejich snaze a podpoře.

Poválečné období, zejména po 1. světové válce, bylo charakteristické poklesem participace a zájmu mladých afroamerických žen o afroamerický feminismus. To donutilo členky afroamerického feminismu k daleko větší aktivitě. Ekonomická deprese probíhající během třicátých let 20. století způsobila výrazný propad životních podmínek Afroameričanů. Rozšířil se trend svobodných matek a neúplných rodin, ve kterých úlohu hlavy rodiny představovala matka.

Šedesátá léta 20. století byla "boomem" hnutí za občanská práva a otázka afroamerického feminismu byla na chvíli odsunuta do pozadí. Afroamerické ženy se opět spojily s afroamerickými muži v boji proti rasové segregaci. K hnutí za občanská práva se připojili také "bílí" studenti. Ačkoliv Afroameričané dosáhli několika významných posunů ve vývoji občanských práv, ne všechny jejich požadavky byly splněny, což přispělo k opětovnému oživení afroamerického feminismu.

Během osmdesátých let začaly afroamerické ženy pociťovat potřebu odlišit se od feminismu bělošského. Některé se začaly více ztotožňovat s termínem womanismus a některé s termínem černý feminismus. Rozdíl mezi těmito dvěma hnutími byl podíl účasti afroamerických mužů. Womanismus narozdíl od černého feminismu upřednostňuje spolupráci s opačným pohlavím.

Jak můžeme vidět, vývoj i strategie afroamerický feminismu prošly několika změnami. Bohužel i ve 21. století stále existují překážky, které znemožňují afroamerickým ženám prožít kvalitní a plnohodnotný život. Můžeme jen hádat, jak se s těmito překážkami vyrovnají tentokrát.

Annotation

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This bachelor thesis concentrates on Afro-American feminism. It is divided into four chapters. Each chapter deals with the particular period of the development of Afro-American feminism. The chapters provide the information about the beginnings of the Afro-Americans in the U.S.A., the situation during the slavery, the abolition of slavery, the women's struggle to obtain the right to vote, the situation during the First and the Second World War. The thesis also covers with the development during the revolutionary 1960s and after. There are also mentioned the definitions of Afro-American feminism, the differences between "white" feminism and black feminism and also the differences between womanism and black feminism.

Anotace

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Tato práce je zaměřena na vývoj afroamerického feminismu. První kapitola pojednává o tom, jak se Afroameričané ocitli v U.S.A a o postavení Afroameričanů, zejména žen, během otroctví. Druhá kapitola se zabývá vývojem afroamerického feminismu od zrušení otroctví až po 2. světovou válku. Třetí kapitola je zaměřena na šedesátá léta 20. století a hnutí za občanská práva. V poslední kapitole jsou hlavním tématem osmdesátá léta. Tato kapitola také vysvětluje pojmy jako feminismus, womanismus, rozdíl mezi afroamerickým feminismem a womanismem a rozdíl mezi afroamerickým feminismem a feminismem klasickým.

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