



Social

**MOREL PAST: A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY IN PAULE MARSHALL'S
BROWN GIRL BROWNSTONES AND THE CHOSEN PLACE, THE
TIMELESS PEOPLE**



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ABSTRACT

South African Women are suffering of racism. In order to get over the sufferings, they go back to the past, it helps them to go forward and help them to understand their own self.

Keywords:

Bournehills, Barbadian community, community, modernisation, African Diaspora.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Marshall's works reveals a progression from the divided individual self to the self-made whole through merging with the community. The concept of community is ever broadening, moving from the Barbadian community in Brooklyn in the first novel to, ultimately, the entire Africa world, past, present, and future in the past. – **Eugenia Collier**

Selina in Brown Girl, Brownstones represents the need for African people to confront their history in order to understand themselves as individuals and as a community. Marshall illustrates that in order for Selina to understand herself, she must confront her past. The past is embodied in her mother, Selina, and in her West Indian heritage. After her experience with racism, Selina also realizes her heritage extends beyond the West Indian. She realizes that she is now with Miss Thompson, a woman outside of her Barbadian community. The past she must confront is the one that binds all of these people together. She must confront her African past. At the end of the novel, Selina breaks with the materialism and clannishness of the Barbadian community. However, she will take with her those elements of the community that will give her the strength to endure. She also wants to give them something in return for what they had given her:

She wanted, suddenly, to leave something with them. But she had nothing... Then she remembered the two silver bangles she had always worn. She pushed up her coat sleeve and stretched one until it passed over her wrist, and, without turning, hurled it high over her shoulder. The bangle rose behind her, a bit of silver against the moon, then curved swiftly downward and stuck a stone. (P.310)

The bracelet she keeps a symbol, reminding her of her community and those things that she had gained from it. One bangle thrown, one bangle kept – these two silver bands testify to Marshall's role as a writer, whose task has been to articulate the difficulties of being in two worlds at once and the need to reunite the children of the African Diaspora.

The Chosen Place, The Timeless People, Marshall illustrates the necessity of reversing the old order and the importance of using one's history as a mechanism for change. In Bourne hills the citizens are reluctant to accept modernisation projects because control of these projects would come from outside the community, and would place them in a situation where they would have no control over their lives and would, in fact, be enslaved to the technology as well as to those who controlled it. Until Bournehills decide to improve its own situation they will continue their current life style.

In Bourne hills, not only are the vestiges of slavery and colonization evident, but also evident are Africans continuities Marshall infuses the work with an African consciousness through her depiction of Bournehills as a community that continues to observe rituals associated with Africa, as well as through her characterization of the male elders, who formally govern Bournehills, and through the character Leesy walker, an elderly woman, who honours the traditions of her African ancestors. Edward Barthwaite writes that The Chosen Place, The Timeless People is a novel of reconnection. He defines the connective process as "recognition of the African presence in our society not as a static quality, but root-living, creative, and still part of the main" (P.103). Bournehill's unwillingness to change and its rejection of western values and modernization efforts enable it to continue the tradition of its ancestors.

Equally The Chosen Place, The Timeless People is about Merle Kinbona, a middle -aged women, who has returned to Bournehills after a humiliating experience aboard in England. She has returned to Bournehills, the home of her birth, to recover from her experience as well as to sort her identity. Merle, because of her past experiences, is only half alive. Marshall writes:

On a personal level, she's still trying to come to terms with her life and history as a black woman, still seeking to reconcile all the conflicting elements to form a viable self. And she continues to search, as in the novel, for the kind of work, for a role in life that will put to use her tremendous energies and talent. (P.109)

Marshall connects and culture in the chosen place, the timeless people. She depicts Merle as an embodiment of Bournehills. Not only do they share a history of pain and abuse, but they must also confront their pasta if they are to face the future, Marshall connects culture not only through the character of Merle, but also in her depiction of the visitors from the United States.

The American team consists of Saul Amron, an anthropologist, and Allen Fusso, a statistician. Also accompanying Saul is his wife, Harriet. Robert Bone writes in his review of *The Chosen Place* and *The Timeless People*:

As the characters acquire symbolic resonance, we see that Allen represents an effete civilization that has pledged its soul to the gods of technology. Harriet embodies the suicidal impulse of the western psyche: its unyielding racism and will to dominate, despite a superficial liberalism. Saul represents the possibility of transformation and renewal. (P.4)

Marshall uses the relationship between the Bournehills community and Saul to show how it continues to be exploited by large corporations that often initiates projects in underdeveloped countries without consulting or involving the residents. These corporations, under the guise of philanthropy, often use situations that they have created to restore desolate communities back to their proper order. This is demonstrated through CASR's attempt to provide resources to Bournehills, even though it had once profited from the colonial slave trade, the legacy of which now hinders the Bournehills community from being self-sustaining.

CASR's involvement with underdeveloped countries is not new. The agency is a creation of the fictional Philadelphia research institute. The Philadelphia Research Institute obtains money from larger American corporations to fund its projects. The institution's goal is to uplift the impoverished of the world. This allows the Philadelphia Research Institute to save considerably on government taxes, since the money funneled into their development program is considered a charitable contribution and can be deducted from their taxes. One of CASR's major contributions is UNICOR was created by a merger of family businesses, one of which is that of the window Shippen, Harriet, Saul's wife is a descendent of the window Shippen. The Shippens had realized their wealth during the slave trade by selling human cargo as well as provisions consisting of flour, cornmeal, and salted cod-fish. These provisions continue to provide the community of Bournehills with much of its nourishment.

2. CONCLUSION

The novels of Paule Marshall demonstrate how Africa functions and is represented in her works. She articulates the need for people throughout the African Diaspora to confront and use the past as a vehicle for empowerment.

3. REFERENCES

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