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**The Media Portrayal of African-Americans in the American Popular
Culture**

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The Media Portrayal of African-Americans in the American Popular Culture

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedené prameny a literatury.

Plzeň, duben 2020

.....

Pavla Fíkarová

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1 INTRODUCTION

The main topic of this bachelor thesis is The Media Portrayal of African-Americans in American Popular Culture. This topic belongs to the category of Popular culture(s) and conflicts. The task was to choose one English-speaking country and one major conflict that has occurred in its history and make a portrayal in the popular culture of the country.

The content of this work begins with a brief history of African Americans in the United States of America for a better understanding and approximation of their historical situation to their perception in popular culture. Our history begins with the arrival of the first Africans in the early 17th Century on the continent of America, the position of African-Americans during the War of Independence and their perception as human beings as stated in the original Declaration of Independence. Then, I continue by cruel slavery during the Civil War, to racial segregation and struggle for their civil rights during the 20th century. In the second part, I focus on popular culture and each of its sections, such as music, literature or comics. I mention here representatives of these sections, such as writers, actors, singers or athletes. At the beginning of every section, my explanation for, why I have chosen exactly these representatives, is written and the general definition of this section follows. At the end of each section, there are listed any common features or outcomes that have arisen.

The aim of this work is to reflect the contemporary image or understanding of African-Americans in modern American popular culture. How far African-Americans have come over the centuries, from slaves to the Academy Awards winners or Nobel Prizes holders known worldwide with respect. In order to emphasize this progress and to reach a result, it was necessary to have a glimpse and a brief presentation of the history of African-Americans.

In addition to literature borrowed from public libraries or scanned online, Internet sources such as verified articles were used as the main source of information. Lastly, films and documents concerning this theme were applied.

2 Explanation of the expressions

2.1 Development of the expression “race”

“A “race” is a physical division of mankind, the members of which are distinguished by the possession of similar combinations of anatomical features due to their common heredity” (Hooton 1937, 152).

It is said that the term "race" has been an American invention for a long period, possibly dating back to August 1619, when the first ship with 20 African slaves arrived in Jamestown, Virginia. This happened a year before Mayflower and Pilgrims arrived in Plymouth Rock. Thus, a great inquiry began, which did not reach one conclusion among anthropologists concerning the human race. This questioning also included the question whether any race exists at all and whether there is a link between the existence of racism and racial classification. The classification of the human race is based on a wide range of anatomical features, ranging from skin colour to blood type.

During the 20th century, many texts have been published denying or confirming the existence of the human race. It was designated for 30 groups of races and they gave rise to six main races: Negroid, Mongoloid, White, Australian, American Indian, and Polynesian. These groups originated from different sets of physical character. Boyd, an anthropologist, defined race as a population that differs considerably from another human population in terms of repetition of one or more genes, which they have (Anemone 2010, 1-5).

Montagu, an anthropologist, argued that the notion of race among humans is completely unsupported by biological facts and racial classification is a social and political instrument that puts danger into human existence. Further, proclaim that race is dangerous to wash and biological fallacy, all racial patterns are racial. According to him, the term “*race*” should be replaced by a better term “*ethnic group*” (Anemone 2010, 1-5).

Now much has changed since 1950, yet the term *race* still persists in human society and is being worked with. Anthropologists who support the claim of the human race, but still do not find a consensus on its definition and division.

Many anthropologists argue that the term race is an element of human imagination or a "folk concept" that persisted in the pre-science era when Europeans discovered a new world of human diversity and the idea of race for human diversity invented by humans at a certain time and place for a particular purpose. Thus, the expression race continues in the 21st century, but not as a natural or scientific fact, but as a social and cultural reality.

W. E. B. Du Bois saw the value of race as a line dividing individuals and groups, called the "colour line problem", when he identified the major problem that the US faced in the 20th century. Gunnar Myrdal gave the expression race as a synonym for "American dilemma". Despite significant developments in American culture, racism persists in the 21st century. Crime, poverty, health care is also a reflection of racial segregation. One of the important analyses of race in modern American culture is called *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, and Unequal*. It is up to each of the Americans to make their own opinion based on both natural and social sciences on this important subject (Anemone 2010, 1-5).

2.2 Meaning of the expression “segregation”

A dictionary explanation says that segregation means removing one thing from the presence of another and treating it as a separate entity. In relation to our issue of Afro-Americans, segregation is meant to keep African Americans separate from white Americans and treat them differently because of their skin colour (Study.com).

3 History of African-Americans in the USA

To understand the topic of this bachelor's thesis, it is necessary to delve a little into the history of African-Americans and find out their origins in the USA and harsh history to the present popular culture in the 21st century.

Black American's history started in the 17th century with indentured servitude in British America and progresses onto the election of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the USA. Between those landmarks there were other events and issues both resolved and ongoing, that were faced by blacks. Some of these were slavery, reconstruction, development of the black community, participation in the Great Military Conflicts of the United States, racial segregation and the Civil Rights Movement. Blacks made up the single largest racial minority in the United States, the second largest group after whites in the United States (Jordan 2013, 1).

3.1. From coming to America to the Declaration of Independence

The existence of African-Americans on the American continent is highlighted only with the problem of slavery, i.e. since 1861 during the Civil War or also called the War of the North against the South. In fact, the African-Americans reached America in 1619, during the first colonization by the British as indentured servants who settled in Jamestown, Virginia. This date is considered the very first arrival of blacks to the American colonies. It happened a year before Pilgrim's arrival on Plymouth Rock. From the very first moment, blacks were discriminated against, for the white man had been practicing this long before (Higginbotham 1978, 19-20).

As English settlers died from harsh conditions, more and more blacks were brought to work as labourers. Blacks for many years were similar in legal position to poor English indentures who traded several years' labour in exchange for passage to America. There were also exceptions at the beginning of the era African-Americans in America. Black could legally raise crops and

cattle to purchase their freedom. They raised families, marrying other blacks and sometimes intermarrying with Indians (Native Americans) or English settlers. By the 1640's, several Black families owned farms around Jamestown and some became wealthy by colonial standards (Jordan 2013, 1).

The popular conception of a race-based slave system did not fully develop until the 18th century. The first Black congregation and churches were organized before 1800 in both Northern and Southern cities following the Great Awakening. By 1775, Blacks made up 20% of the population in the American Colonies, which made the second largest ethnic group after the English. During the 1770's, Blacks, both enslaved and free, helped rebellious English colonists secure American Independence by defeating the British in the American Revolution. Blacks and English fought side by side and were fully integrated. James Armistead, a Black American, played a large part in making possible the 1781 Yorktown victory, which established the United States as an Independent Nation. Other Blacks were Prince Whipple and Oliver Cornwell, who are both depicted in the front of the boat in George Washington's Famous 1776 Crossing the Delaware portrait (Jordan 2013, 1-2; Hashaw 2007, 17-18).

3.1.1. The Founding Fathers and their attitude to slavery

The Founding Fathers reports to the most influential political leaders of the American Revolutionary era responsible for a successful war of independence from Great Britain, liberal ideas in the Declaration of Independence and the Republican form of government defined in the US Constitution.

The following 10 names represent the "gallery of greats:" John Adams, Samuel Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Marshall, George Mason, and George Washington. George Washington is considered the most important (Ellis 2007, 1).

The Founding Fathers gave birth to the American Constitution, which now stands for "all races are equal". Ever since colonial times, it has been believed

that different races differ from one another in skills and qualities and create different societies. Already in 1776 under the Founders and the proclamation of the Declaration, slavery had worked in North America for over 150 years. In 1770, 40% of Caucasian households in Manhattan owned a black slave. The founders considered slavery immoral and wanted its abolition, but the liberated slaves intended to send off the ocean from the US. Although Thomas Jefferson wanted to abolish slavery, he did not consider blacks equal to white men. After liberation, the slaves would have to be put aside from the possibility of mixing. The founders themselves had their slaves.

After the ratification of the Constitution of 1788, the first Citizenship Act of 1790 comes into force, which states that only whites can acquire citizenship and immigration laws in order to preserve the Caucasian majority in the US were abolished only in 1965 (Deliandiver.org).

3.2. Slavery during the Civil War

In history, we will move forward to a period in which the African-Americans played another important role, the Civil War. By 1860, 500 000 Blacks lived free across the country (Jordan 2013, 1-2).

In the same time, cotton production was a major pillar of the US economy, as was England - the home of the cotton factory. Since 1820, production has increased 10 times. Demand for labour has increased. African-Americans were the best choice to endure the heat and hard work. Over time, cotton growing and African-Americans have become inseparable. If one were at risk, the other would be at risk. The partial closure of trade with African-Americans reduced supply, and the economic well-being of planters required the treatment of slaves so that they not only worked well, but also were still heading towards a rapid increase in numbers. This, of course, did not fortune anything good and therefore slavery is considered one of the factors of the Civil War in the US in 1861 (Hart 2016, 7-8).

The Confederate Army went to war to defend the nation of slave states. The basic political issue in the conflict was therefore the future of slavery. At that

time, there was an effort to maintain clear distinctions between black and white, master and servant, free and slave. The defence of slavery consisted of motivating Confederate soldiers to fight. Slavery proved necessary for a war machine. The slaves served tens of thousands in the southern armies - never as soldiers, but as workers who cooked food, washed horses, and dug ditches (Muse.jhu.edu).

On January 1, 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed a very important and influential document known as the Emancipation Proclamation. Many people believed that this document would definitely end slavery. In fact, the document was to free from slavery only the South without the North. It was basically just a disarmament of the South by removing one of their strongest methods of production. Originally, Lincoln believed in the progressive elimination of slavery in all states. He believed that it was primarily up to the states to oversee the progressive abolition of slavery in their own individual power. Regardless of his political position on the matter, Lincoln had always believed that slavery was wrong. He was a masterful anti-slavery leader. However, the Emancipation Proclamation served more as a military maneuverer. The slavery finally ended with up two years later, in 1865 (Striner 2006, 1-4; Historycooperative.org).

3.2.1. Mentions of African-Americans in the US Constitution

The three-fifth clause meant that the enslaved blacks in the state would count as three-fifths of the white population of that state (Article 1, Section 2 of the United States Constitution of 1787).

Another important clause prohibited slavery in the Northwest Territories of the United States, and the United States' participation in international slave trade was terminated in 1807 (Blackpast.org). Until this year, there were 3, 5 million enslaved Blacks in the United States due to the Atlantic Slave Trade (Jordan 2013, 1-2).

The provisions of three fifths were in effect until the 13th amendment after the Civil War, which liberated all enslaved people in the United States. In 1868,

the 14th amendment gave to blacks, free and non-free, full citizenship. Moreover, the 15th amendment granted blacks the right to vote (Blackpast.org).

The "Reconstruction Changes" (otherwise Amendments 13, 14, 15) were the first to be enacted immediately after the Civil War and all addressed issues concerning the legal and political status of African Americans.

“AMENDMENT XIII

Passed by Congress January 31, 1865. Ratified December 6, 1865.

[...]

Section 1.

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Section 2.

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

AMENDMENT XIV

Passed by Congress June 13, 1866. Ratified July 9, 1868.

[...]

Section 1.

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law, which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

[...]

Section 4.

The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts incurred for payment of pensions and bounties for services in suppressing insurrection or rebellion, shall not be questioned. However, neither

the United States nor any State shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or any claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave; but all such debts, obligations and claims shall be held illegal and void.

[...]

AMENDMENT XV

Passed by Congress February 26, 1869. Ratified February 3, 1870.

Section 1.

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State because of race, color, or previous condition of servitude [...] (Blackpast.org).“

3.3. Segregation in the 20th century

After the Civil War and the abolition of slavery in America, laws persisted, the so-called Jim Crows governing the relationship between whites and African-Americans in former slave states. Racial segregation was to make African-Americans inferior and subordinate. It was forbidden to marry between races, to attend the same school with whites, not to use all public services and opportunities at the same level as whites. These bans have made the lives of the blacks limiting even after their deaths, and the cemeteries have been divided. The origin of the post-war system lay in the Reconstruction, which sought to return African-Americans as close to slave status as possible. African-Americans worked only in the agricultural sector or as household helpers. They were even arrested when they refused to serve whites. That is why the Blacks have created their own company. They founded churches and an independent economy, united families, ran for themselves. Due to persistent struggle and personalities like Martin Luther King, racial segregation was eventually recognized as unconstitutional (Zuczek 2015, 170-173).

Blacks quickly set up congregations for themselves, as well as schools, community and civic associations, to have space away from white control or oversight. Southern states enacted Jim Crow Laws to enforce control or

oversight. Southern states enacted Jim Crow Laws to enforce racial segregation and disenfranchisement. Most Blacks followed the Jim Crow Laws, using a mascot compliance to prevent becoming victims of racially motivated violence. To maintain self—esteem and dignity Blacks such as Anthony Overton and Mary McLeod Bethune continued to build their own schools, churches, banks, social clubs and other businesses.

The Civil Rights Movement from 1954 to 1968 was directed at abolishing racial discrimination against Blacks, particularly in Southern United States. The March on Washington for jobs and freedom and the conditions, which brought it into being, are credited with putting pressure on President John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

Lyndon B. Johnson put his support behind passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that banned discrimination in public accommodations, employment and labour unions, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which expanded federal authority over states to ensure Black political participation through protection of voter registration and elections.

Politically and economically, Blacks have made substantial strides during the post-civil rights era. In 1989, Douglas Wilder became the first Black elected Governor in U.S. History. Clarence Thomas became the second Black Supreme Court Justice. In 1992, Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois became the first Black woman elected to the U.S. Senate. There were 8,936 Black officeholders in the United States in 2000, showing a net increase of 7,467 since 1970. In 2001, there were 484 Black mayors.

On November 4, 2008, Democratic Senator Barack Obama defeated Republican Senator John McCain and became the first black elected President of the United States. Ninety-five black voters voted for Obama. He received enormous support from young and educated whites (Asians, Hispanics and Native Americans). Obama chose hope as the centre of his campaign. He focused on advocating working families, poor communities, education, the environment, ethics reforms (Jordan 2013, 1-2).



Picture 1. Separate waiting room sign, 1943

3.4. Personalities of the segregation

The five personalities of American History, listed below, were in some way involved in the struggle for the rights of blacks (Biographyonline.net).

3.4.1. William Lloyd Garrison

William Lloyd Garrison was an American abolitionist, journalist and social reformer. December 10, 1805, he was born in Newburyport, Massachusetts as the son of immigrants. He is mainly known for the much-read abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator* existing from 1831 until 1865, when slavery was abolished. He was one of the founders of the Anti-Slave Society. In addition, he was a proponent of the emancipation of slaves in the United States. Garrison was also an advocate of women's rights and the voice of the women's electoral movement (Mayer 2008, 15-21).

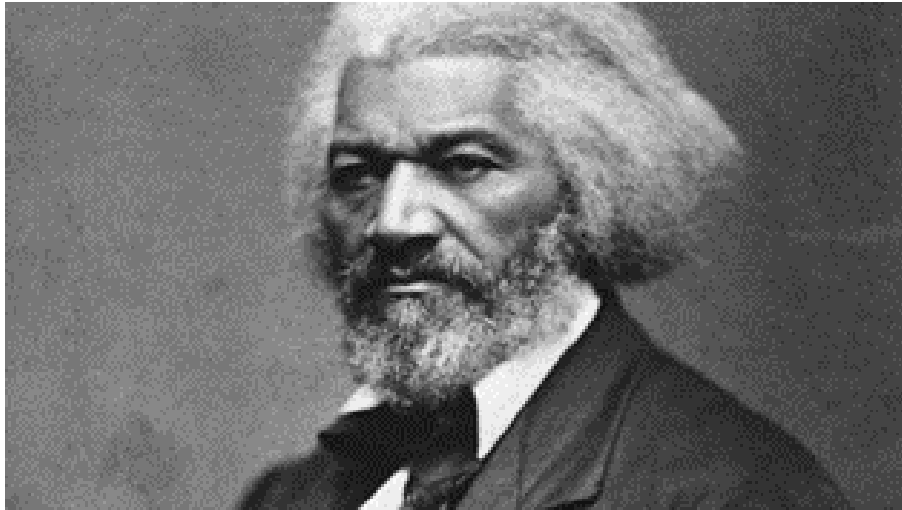


Picture 2. William Lloyd Garrison

3.4.2. Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass was born into a slave family in February 1817 on the East Coast of Maryland in Tuckahoe and he grew up on a plantation with his grandmother. He educated himself, he learned to write, read and speak very well at an early age. In young age, he escaped from slavery. Douglass became one of the greatest political leaders, writers and orators. He became famous for his rhetoric and critique of slavery. He has also written several autobiographical books, such as *The Story of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave* (Douglass 2005, 5).

He also became an advisor to President Lincoln, a diplomatic representative of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and a leader of the Abolitionist movement. All his life he believed in the equality of all people - blacks, Indians, women, immigrants (Douglass 2003, 5).



Picture 3. Frederick Douglass

3.4.3. Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln is considered the first bigger figure fighting against inequality, oppression, injustice and slavery in the US. Abraham Lincoln's position on slavery is one of the most discussed aspects of his life. *"If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong"*, he stated. Lincoln did not abolish the slavery at all, but he focused on the less politically challenging goal of preventing the creation of new slave states (Striner 2006, 1-4).

Specifically, blocking slavery in the new Western territories. Lincoln's activism on that issue started in reaction against the 1854 Kansas–Nebraska Act, designed by his great rival Stephen A. Douglas, a Senator from Illinois. Abraham Lincoln signed on January 1, 1863 during the Civil War the document known as the Emancipation Proclamation, which was taken by many as abolishing slavery. However, in fact, it was a military maneuverer to disarm the South (Historycooperative.org).

3.4.4. Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks was born in Tuskegee, Alabama on February 4, 1913. Her father was a carpenter and builder, often travelled. Her mother was a teacher. She was also a black woman born into a century that her skin colour was not desired. The reason for her glory, on December 1, 1955, she refused to give up

her seat to a white man in a segregated bus resulting in a bus boycott, which was organized by a 26-year-old Baptist minister, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. (Parks 1999, 1-6).

A year later, when the boycott finally ended, bus segregation was decided as unconstitutional. The civilian right movement was a national cause. Rosa Sparks was out of a job and faced to regular threats because of her activism. Yet there is much more to Rosa Sparks' story than just one act of defiance. In straightforward, moving language, she tells her vital role in the struggle for equality for all Americans. Her dedication is inspiring, her story is unforgettable. Rosa Parks died Monday in Detroit, Michigan. She was 92. Parks co-founded the Rosa and Raymond Parks Institute for Self Development to help young people pursue educational opportunities, get them registered to vote and work toward racial peace. She accepted many awards, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1996 and the Congressional Gold Medal in 1999. *"This medal is encouragement for all of us to continue until all have rights"*, she said at the June 1999 ceremony for the latter medal (Edition.cnn.com).



Picture 4. Rosa Parks

3.4.5. Martin Luther King Jr.

Michael, later Martin, Luther King Jr. was born January 15, 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia into a great depression. He was an educated and strong believer. He, like his grandfather and his father, was a pastor at the Baptist Church on Dexter Avenue in Montgomery, Alabama. He was one of the leading leaders of the African American civil rights movement. In 1963, he participated in a march to Washington, where he gave his famous speech "I have a dream", in which it tells the dream of a better, more equal and more democratic America. In 1964, he received the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end racial segregation and discrimination. Later he dealt with issues of inequality in education, career choice, health care, right to vote. His life was forcibly ended by the assassination committed by James Earl Ray on 4 April 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee (Hourly History 2018, 4-5).



Picture 5. Martin Luther King Jr.

4 African-Americans in popular culture

Now, a period, that is the friendliest toward African-Americans, opens. For African-Americans, this is a period of economic, political, cultural, and social growth. Let us discuss the perception of African-Americans through the lenses of popular culture.

4.1. Definition of popular culture

A popular culture is a simple culture that is widely favoured by many people. Another definition, popular culture is culture that is left over after we have decided what high culture is. A residual culture does not meet the required standards qualified as high culture. The definition of popular culture is often supported by the claim that it is a mass-producing commercial culture = mass culture, while high culture is the result of the individual's creative act. Popular culture is simple, lay, manipulative, positively accepted and its audience is not discriminated against. Unfortunately, many works of popular culture will not succeed in spite of strong advertising and publicity (Storey 2012, 1-8).

William Shakespeare's works are nowadays classified as high culture. However, in the past centuries, his works were categorized as popular culture (popular theatre). It is similar to other great authors, such as Charles Dickens, or a film noir that started out as a popular cinema and today belongs to the academic and film clubs.

Popular culture has a wide range of genres, including popular music, cyber culture, sports, entertainment, literature, fashion, advertising and television (Storey 2012, 1-8).

4.2. Literature

4.2.1. General definition

African-American culture is a culture created in the United States by writers of African descent. The main themes and issues examined in this literature are

the role of African-Americans in American society, what it means to be an American, African-American culture, racism, slavery, and social equality. African-American writing incorporated oral forms, such as spiritual, sermons, gospel music, blues or rap. African-American writers have been awarded the highest awards, including the Nobel Prize (Verney 2003, 8-10).

4.2.2. Concrete authors and books

As a representative of African-American literature, I have chosen authors who have received Pulitzer Prizes or even Nobel Prizes for their works. Furthermore, I tried to select authors who deal in their books with the subject of segregation, racism or limited civil rights, because these topics accompany my whole bachelor thesis.

Chloe Anthony Wofford Morrison

Chloe Anthony Wofford Morrison, known as Toni Morrison, was one of America's most influential writers. She has held many other roles, such as editor, novelist, college professor, mother, griot of the African American community. She started writing at the age of thirty and was completely absorbed by it. She created breakthrough works. She often explained that through the story one can best identify others, our role and responsibility in society. In 1977, the critically acclaimed book *Song of Solomon* guaranteed her national attention. She wrote the book *Beloved*, for which she won the Pulitzer Prize in 1988. The story of the book is inspired by the life of Margaret Garner, an African-American woman who fled from Kentucky slavery in 1856 to Ohio, a free country. Unfortunately, she was captured and killed her child rather than becoming a slave. She also gained world recognition after the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993 (Li 2009, 11-13).



Picture 6. Chloe Anthony Wofford “Toni” Morrison

Alice Walker

Alice Walker is a world-famous writer, poet and activist all of her adult life. She is a human rights defender. She is a very prolific writer traveling around the world and aiding where necessary. In 1983, she won the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction and the National Book Award for hardcover fiction. She has written many famous books translated into many languages, but the most famous and closest to our topic is the novel *The Colour Purple* in 1982. The plot takes place in rural Georgia. The book focuses on the life of African American women in the south of the United States in the 1930s, highlighting their low position, limited freedom and often-cruel treatment. The book is also about liberating yourself from the forced religion, thinking and the dominant man. The book was also filmed and starring Whoopi Goldberg (Alicewalkersgarden.com).



Picture 7. Alice Walker

Alex Palmer Haley

Alex Palmer Haley was born in 1921 and died in 1992. He was raised in the segregated south and was among the educated middle class. He was a writer and author. His most famous book is *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* from 1976. It tells the story of Kunta Kinte, an 18th-century African, captured as an adolescent, sold to slavery in Africa, transported to North America; following his life and lives of his descendants in the United States down to Haley. The book has ranked among the greatest bestsellers ever (Haley 2007, 7-10).

Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou, born Marguerite Annie Johnson, was an American poet, singer and civil rights activist. It was awarded many prizes and degrees. Angelou is best known for her seven autobiographies, in which she describes her memories and experiences of childhood and early adulthood. The first autobiography brought her recognition and success. In the book, she describes her life until the age of 17. Before the role of the writer, she was sorted out as a cook, a sex worker, a nightclub dancer, a member of the opera, a journalist in Egypt and Ghana during the decolonization of Africa. Later she was an actress, director, producer of films and television programs. She was active in the

Human Rights Movement and worked with Martin Luther King Jr and Malcolm X (Mayaangelou.com).

Other famous African-American authors include poets Natasha Trethewey, Rita Frances Dove and James Emanuel; author and professor John Edgar Wideman. The same thing, their roots, connects all these authors. All of them try to interpret through their works the struggle and inequality that either they or their ancestors had to contend with during history. They visualize their pride of being African-American.

4.3. Comics

4.3.1. General definition

Comic books, or the visual part of art in sequence, were created around the 1930s in the United States of America. They started as part of the news, were mostly humorous and they became the most profitable and favourable part of popular culture. They combined a variety of readers. They persisted from the Great Depression, through World War II, the Cold War, to the New Millennium. Among the biggest comics giants are Marvel and D.C, who are most popular with their creativity and ideas (Krensky 2007, 100-101).

4.3.2. Concrete authors and comics

Among all the comic book heroes, I have chosen heroes who were originally of African-American origin. However, some of superheroes were originally whites, but lately actors of African-American origin in a film version played them.

Marvel Comics

Marvel Universe is more lively and popular in popular culture than ever. Marvel originated in 1939 by the character of Namor, which was created by talented Bill Everett. The first human patriotic hero was Captain America, created by comic giants Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. The hero immediately won the heart of the readers, mainly because he appeared during the Second World

War, the sales skyrocketed. A big break when Stan Lee took the pens in the early 60s. The legendary Fantastic 4 came into being, but that was just the beginning, with other comic book legends under Lee's hands as Hulk, Ant Man, Iron Man, Thor and masterpiece The Amazing Spider-man. Today, even after 75 years, Marvel is a worldwide phenomenon of film franchising (Krensky 2007, 100-101).

Black Panther

Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created the hero Black Panther in the Silver Age of comic books. His real name is T'Challa, king and protector of the fictional African nation Wakanda. Black Panther is the first superhero of African descent in American comics, and other heroes of this kind arose several years longer. The comic character first appeared in Marvel Films in 2016 and his own film appeared two years later, 2018. Actor Chadwick Aaron Boseman performed the role of the Black Panther. The comic book character has penetrated the world of video games (Forbeck 2014, 53).



Picture 8. Black Panther

Blade

Writer Marv Wolfman and Gene Colan created Blade, another comic hero of African descent. Blade has several of his films independently of Marvel, starring Wesley Snipes. July 2019, there was a statement that Mahershala Ali would play Blade in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (Forbeck 2014, 56).

Falcon

Falcon, originally named Samuel Thomas Wilson, is another Marvel hero of the African Soil created by writer-editor Stan Lee and artist Gene Colan. Anthony Mackie portrays The Falcon in The Marvel Cinematic Universe Films. Anthony Mackie takes up the role in the upcoming Disney + series, The Falcon and the Winter Soldier, which is due to be released in 2020. The comic book character has no superpowers. His role is alongside the Captain of America (Forbeck 2014, 126).

Nick Fury

Writer and artist Jack Kirby and writer Stan Lee created Nicholas Joseph Fury Sr. He is leading agent with no special abilities of the fictional espionage agency S.H.I.E.L.D. and as an intermediary between the U.S. government and various superheroes. Samuel L. Jackson portrays the character in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (Forbeck 2014, 140).

Storm

Storm was created for Marvel by writer Len Wein and artist Dave Cockrum. Cockrum's original concept for a character with the power of weather control was a male. This changed after he realized that multiple females with cat-related abilities, his first idea for a black female hero, had been created and were in development. Descended from a long line of African witch-priestesses, Storm is a member of the fictional subspecies of humans born with superhuman abilities known as mutants. She is able to control the weather and atmosphere and is considered one of the most powerful mutants on the planet. Storm,

originally named Ororo Munroe, was born to the Kenyan tribal princess and the African-American photojournalist. Storm was brought up in both New York and Cairo. Life had deprived her of her parents and she was an orphan. Storm is a member of the X-team, people with exceptional abilities fighting for equality and peace between people and mutants. This leads me to an idea that the mutant efforts and the theme of this bachelor thesis are similar. Storm first appeared in the Bronze Age of Comic Books. Storm is the first major female character of African descent in comics. She is regarded by some as being Marvel Comics' most important female superhero. Storm is one of the most significant characters in the X-Men series. The character appeared in the already mentioned franchise of the X-Men, as well as in video games, animation, and television. Halle Berry was the first to play Storm in 2000. Alexandra Shipp took on the role of Storm in later X-men movies (Forbeck 2014, 353).



Picture 9. Storm

War Machine

War Machine, proper name James Rupert "Rhodey" Rhodes, originated thanks to David Michelinie and John Byrne. Terrence Howard in Iron Man initially portrayed Rhodes in 2008. Don Cheadle has taken the role in other films. War Machine is a soldier with a super-functioned suit from Tony Stark (Forbeck 2014, 393).

DC Comics

DC Comics is the second big comic world created by heroes like Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman, who have become synonymous with popular culture. DC comics began to appear in February 1935. In June 1938, probably the most famous comic character Superman was created. Batman, Robin and Wonder Woman followed. Over the 80 years, DC has created a range of heroes - Flash, Aquaman, Green Lantern or a new character, Harley Quinn, as well as bad people - Lex Luthor, the Joker. DC has further expanded its audience as it penetrates the world of film, video games or series (Manning 2016, 6-8).

Cyborg

Cyborg is one of the DC heroes of African descent. It first appeared in 1980 and was created by writer Marv Wolfman and artist George Pérez. Ray Fisher played Cyborg in the DC movie franchise. Cyborg was originally an ordinary boy, after the accident lost a large part of the body, which was replaced by an artificial, but completely progressive (Manning 2016, 78-79).



Picture 10. Cyborg

Image Comics

Image Comics is a publisher of comics and graphic novels founded in 1992. Image is the third largest publisher of comics in the United States. It offers science fiction, fantasy, romance, horror, crime fiction, historical fiction and humour. Image has many awards. Their titles appear regularly on The New York Times, The Washington Post or the Amazon bestseller list (Imagecomics.com).

Bitter Root

A relatively new comic related to the topic of the work is called Bitter root. The first edition dates back to 2018. The author is David Walker. The main characters are the Sangerye family of African-American descent. The Sangerye family are the greatest monster hunters of all time and are now specialists in curing the souls of those infected by hate. Their mission is to fight the monsters in the Harlem Renaissance, which requires a divided family to unite. The new comic shows how white a man has power, but a black man has weapons.

Because the leaders are all black, the issue of racism is also discussed here (Washingtonpost.com).

After working out this part of popular culture, I concluded that comic heroes do not deal so much with a topic of racial segregation, but there is a prevailing focus on the abilities of heroes and their struggle with villains.

4.4. Movies, television programs

4.4.1. General definition

The presence of African-Americans in the movies was kicked off by Hattie McDaniel played by Mammy, the house servant, in *Gone with the Wind* and she received the first black Oscar in 1940. It was an adaptation of the novel by Margaret Mitchell's novel, which won the Pulitzer Prize. The plot took place in the American South during the Civil War and Reconstruction. It became an icon of film success. Throughout the 20th century, the African-American actor community played only the role of servants and centred on themes such as tale of rags to riches, thug life, or segregation. Many surveys have claimed that the media portrait of minorities tends to reflect the attitude of white people to minorities rather than exposing or showing the very lives of minorities. At the end of the 19th century and in the first half of the 20th century, the film industry tried to avoid African-American actors. In the 19th century, "black faced" was used, which meant putting on the dark makeup on a face of a white actor, so there was no need to hire African-Americans. However, "black faced" was stopped due to tendencies toward racism. Roles for communities with darker skin tones were sometimes humiliating, for example: they served whites, behaved foolishly, were a sexual threat. Nevertheless, the desire to appear in Hollywood and pave the way for future actors was stronger. In recent years, African Americans have been common on big screens, but still narrowly occupied in blockbusters. Hollywood has recently shown a greater willingness to make African-American movies. Nevertheless, prejudices persist in Hollywood (Bogle 2019, Introduction; Reid 2019, 9-26).

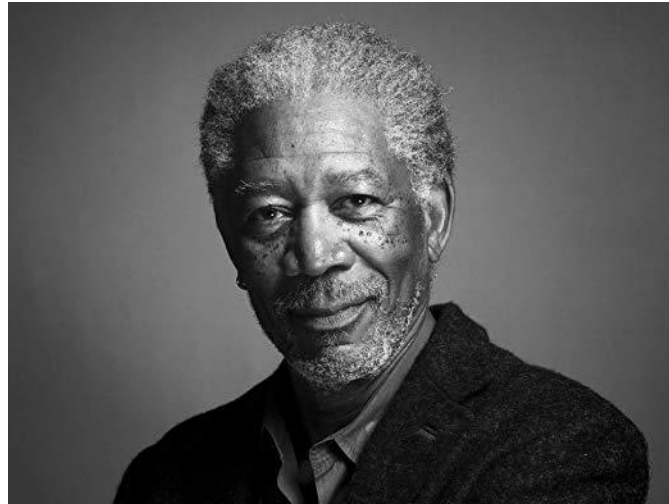
4.4.2. Concrete actors, actresses, movies and shows

For this section of popular culture, in my opinion the most comprehensive, it was difficult to select only a few representatives of the film and television industry, as there are many but still few compared to non-black leaders. Therefore, I voted for an Academy Award winners, but I do not mean that those without this award are not actors of high quality. The other factor I looked at and narrowed my choice was the type of films in which these actors appear and I emphasized the topic of racial segregation. As a result, these actors came out as the best candidates for analysis.

Driving Miss Daisy: Morgan Freeman

Morgan Freeman is an American actor, narrator and commentator originally from Tennessee. Freeman won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor in 2005 for *Million Dollar Baby*. He has also been nominated many times for Oscar for films such as *Driving Miss Daisy* 1989 or *The Shawshank Redemption* 1994. Freeman donates money to charities, which then travel to people affected by natural disasters and seek to raise awareness of environmental problems. He is one of the critics of racism. He said that the only way to get rid of him was to stop talking about him and not celebrate, for example, the Black History Month when white people have no such holiday (Short-biography.com).

Morgan Freeman starred African-American driver Hoke Colburn in the American comedy drama *Driving Miss Daisy*. The film has been commercially and critically successful. Freeman was nominated for an Oscar in the Best Actor category, but unfortunately did not defend his nomination. The film also starred Jessica Tandy, who won Oscar for Best Actress and Dan Aykroyd. The story tells not only about Daisy and about her views on life, but also explores racism against black people, which affects Hoke at the time. The film also touches on anti-semitism in the South and undergoing American society towards radical changes. The story broadcasts the humanity and friendliness that Daisy showed to one of the African-Americans (*Driving Miss Daisy*, 1989).



Picture 11. Morgan Freeman

The Green Mile: Michael Clarke Duncan

Michael Clarke Duncan was an American actor best known for his role as John Coffey in *The Green Mile* from year 1999, for which he was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor. He also played in other famous movies as *Armageddon*. Duncan worked before acting as a bouncer, bodyguard or labourer (Theguardian.com).

The Green Mile is a crime drama with fantasy elements from 1999. The artwork for the film was Steven King's book. In the movie next to Duncan shines Tom Hanks, who has the role of death row corrections officer. After the mysterious prisoner John Coffey is brought to him, miracles begin to happen. Coffey is sentenced to death for allegedly raping and killing two little girls. Coffey is physically imposing but mentally challenged and gentle man. The film points to the ignorance of justice toward the African-American population in terms of criminal acts. There were no investigations, interrogations or ordinary trials, it was sufficient that the defendant was a black man (The Green Mile, 2000).

The Green Book: Mahershala Ali

Mahershala Ali is an American actor, a Californian native named Mahershalalhashbaz Gilmore. In 2008, he first appeared in the famous movie *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. A breakthrough role came in 2013 in the

House of Cards series. In 2017, he appeared in a minor role in *The Hidden Figures*, which focuses on racism. Oscar and true fame came in 2016 after the movie *Moonlight*. Ali became the first Muslim actor to win this award. In 2018, he won the second Oscar for the role of pianist Don Shirley in *The Green Book* (Biography.com).

The Green Book tells the story of two men - nightclub bouncer from the Bronx Frank "Tony Lip" Vallelonga and black virtuoso pianist Don Shirley. Frank is offered to make the driver a forgotten pianist after his music tour of the American South in the early 60s, when racism was the strongest in the US. It slowly reveals the harsh manifestations of racism against African-Americans, as well as the tolerance and friendship arising between men, overcoming Tony's prejudices and the courage to speak out for Don's rights (Independent.co.uk).

Halle Berry

Halle Maria Berry is an American Actress. She won the Academy Award for Best Actress for her 2001 performance in *Monster's Ball*. She became the first African American woman who has ever won Oscar and she is still the only actress to this day. In 2000, the role of Storm came; she became one of Hollywood's best-paid actresses (Johnson 2009, 9-11).



Picture 12. Halle Berry

If Beale Street Could Talk: Regina King

Regina Rene King is an American actress and director. She is the recipient of the Academy Award and the Golden Globe Award. During her acting career, she played mainly minor or supporting roles in movies like *Legally Blonde 2: Red, White & Blonde*, *Ray* and *Miss Congeniality 2: Armed & Fabulous*. In 2019, a great success came when she won her first Oscar for a Supporting Role in *If Beale Street Could Talk* (Peoplepill.com).

If Beale Street Could Talk is an American film drama from 2018 based on James Baldwin's novel of the same name. The story follows a young girl who, with the help of her family, tries to clear the name of her lover who is in prison before their baby is born (*If Beale Street Could Talk*, 2018).

The Help, The Hidden Figures: Octavia Spencer

Octavia Lenora Spencer is an American author, actor and producer. She was awarded the Academy Award or Golden Globe Award for her acting achievements. She is one of two black actresses to receive three Academy Award nominations and the first black actress to receive two consecutive nominations. Spencer made her film debut in the 1996 drama *A Time to Kill*. Following a decade of brief roles in film and television, her breakthrough came in 2011, when she played a house cleaner in the 1960s America in *The Help*, for which she won several awards, including the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress. Spencer received further Academy Award nominations for Best Supporting Actress for playing other women in the 1960s America, the mathematician Dorothy Vaughan in the biographical drama *Hidden Figures* in 2016 or *The Shape of Water* in 2017 (Biography.com).

The Help is a drama film from 2011 based on Kathryn Stockett's 2009 novel of the same name. The film features an ensemble cast, including Jessica Chastain, Viola Davis, Bryce Dallas Howard, Allison Janney, Octavia Spencer and Emma Stone. The film and novel recount the story of a young white woman and aspiring journalist Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan. The story focuses on her relationship with two black house cleaners, Aibileen Clark and Minny Jackson,

during the Civil Rights Movement in 1963 Jackson, Mississippi. In an attempt to become a legitimate journalist and writer, Skeeter decides to write a book from the point of view of the house cleaners, exposing the racism they are faced with as they work for white families. Black domestic workers in 1960s America were referred to as "the help", hence the title of the journalistic expose, the novel and the film (The Help, 2012).

The Hidden Figures is an American biographical drama film from 2016. It is loosely based on the non-fiction book of the same name by Margot Lee Shetterly. The film stars Taraji P. Henson and Katherine Johnson, who calculated the flight trajectories for Project Mercury and other missions. The film also features Octavia Spencer and NASA supervisor and mathematician Dorothy Vaughan and Janelle Monáe and NASA engineer Mary Jackson, with Kevin Costner, Kirsten Dunst, and Mahershala Ali. As it is obvious, the film is about black female mathematicians who worked at the NASA during the Space Race, also about discrimination and disregard which black women had to endure at NASA. Because of their different descent, they could not be featured on any document, even though they came up with their own idea. In simple terms, women in NASA were invisible (The Hidden Figures, 2017).



Picture 13. The Hidden Figures

The Oprah Winfrey Show: Oprah Winfrey

Oprah Gail Winfrey is an American actress, television producer, magazine publisher, philanthropist and presenter of her talk show *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. Nicknamed "The Queen of All Media", she was the richest African American of the 20th century and the first multi billionaire African American in North America. She was considered the largest African American philanthropist in American history. In 2007, Winfrey was considered the most influential personality in the world. In 2013, Winfrey was awarded by the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Obama. In 1985, she was nominated for an Oscar for her role as Sofia in *The Color Purple* in Supporting Role.

The Oprah Winfrey Show, simply *Oprah*, is an American daily talk show hosted by its namesake, Oprah Winfrey, remains one of the highest-rated daytime talk shows in American television history. The show influenced a number of young celebrities. Many of the topics discussed stuck in American pop-cultural consciousness. Her show was not only about entertainment, but also aimed at learning, presenting books and underlining self-development. She was ranked as the top among shows of this kind in history (Garson 2011, 11-16).



Picture 14. Oprah Winfrey

After analysing the films, I concluded that there was mostly a topic of prejudice and discrimination. African-American actors are cast in roles as a driver, a prisoner, or a servant. It is therefore still evident that Hollywood is cautious and outdated regarding the occupation of African-Americans in roles. The only woman possessing Oscar is proven. Nevertheless, people like the themes of racism and prejudices in terms of incomprehension and astonishment, which way was treated by this ethnic group.

I chose three actors and three actresses. From a personal point of view, much more personalities would be worth for mentioning, such as Whoopi Goldberg, Taraji P. Henson, Will Smith, Forest Whitaker, Denzel Washington.

4.5. Music

4.5.1. General definition

African American music is one of the treasures of American culture. This music has evolved over the centuries facing racial discrimination, poverty, segregation and other challenges. Created by creativity and self-expression in African-American families and communities, it has gradually spread beyond these borders to non-black listeners. Music was often created in response to major social and political struggles. During the Civil War ragtime was created, which was the forerunner of jazz. In the 20th century, other genres emerged as R&B, soul, funk, jazz-rock or hip-hop.

To the most famous African-American genre, jazz originated in African-American communities in New Orleans, United States. It originated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and developed from roots in blues and ragtime. Its African roots are manifested mainly in the use of blue tones, transponders, improvisation, polyrhythms, syncopation and dotted (swinging) groups of notes (Peretti 2009, 1-6).

4.5.2. Concrete singers, genres, songs

African-Americans are represented a lot in popular music. They are popular for their specific style, performance and colour of voice. Why have I

chosen these artists? I asked myself: "Who are the best known African-American singers in popular culture?" Those, who jumped in first in my mind, were chosen. In my opinion, these are the best known whose names everyone has heard at least once in his or her lives. I focused on their success and achievements rather than on their personal lives, even though they were sometimes reflected in their work. The main point was to mention their prices, spheres where they are the "best" and their contribution to popular culture.

Louis Armstrong

Louis Daniel Armstrong, nicknamed The Pops, was an American trumpeter, songwriter, vocalist and actor. He was one of the most influential figures in American jazz. He has devoted 50 years to his career and has gone through various stages of jazz. He came from New Orleans, the birthplace of jazz. His voice was unmistakable and rich. Armstrong was the first African American entertainer, so talented that he "crossed", which meant that his music surpassed his skin colour in then-divided America. It reached the highest levels of society. He advocated desegregation. He died at the age of 69 in 1971. He was positively received by white society on stage and off stage. Some criticized him for playing in front of a segregated audience and attributed him a weak attitude to the Civil Movement for Human Rights. President Eisenhower called him "double-sided". His best known songs include *What a Wonderful World* and *Hello Dolly*, for which he won a Grammy Award (Bergreen 1997, 1-6).

Prince

Prince Rogers Nelson, known only as Prince, was an American singer, songwriter, sex symbol and actor. He is one of the main personalities of popular music. He was considered an innovator and known for ascending the stage and his wide range of tones. In his work, he combined many genres of music - rock, R&B, soul, funk, hip-hop, disco, psychedelia, jazz, and pop. Rokad of Minnesota had built his love for music in his youth. Prince is considered the most profitable singer of his time. He has won seven Grammy Awards, the Golden Globe, and an Academy Award. He died in 2016. Prince was an animal rights activist. He

never publicly declared himself to charity until after his death his extent of his activism, philanthropy, and charity was published (Allmusic.com).

Michael Jackson

Michael Joseph Jackson, known as Michael Jackson, was an American singer, songwriter, dancer and musical icon nicknamed King of Pop with countless awards and hits on his account. He is the most distinctive cultural figure of the 20th century and the greatest singer in music history. He shone not only because of his talent, but also because of his fashionable style and personal life. Through dance, popularize the technique that he himself called the Moonwalk. He began his musical career with his brothers at the age of 11 in a band the Jackson 5, led by their father. According to the sources, the father was strict on sons, especially Michael, which led to his future pursuit of complete perfectionism. After launch a solo career, he released countless hits such as *Thriller*, *Beat It*, *Billie Jean*, *Black or White*, *Smooth Criminal* and *Bad*, which shot him at the forefront of pop music. Jackson is one of the best-selling music artists of all time, with estimated sales of over 350 million records worldwide. He was co-author of the song "*We Are the World*" - a benefit for Africa charity. His music and clips directly broke racial barriers. Jackson's music emphasized racial integration, environmentalism and fighting against prejudice and injustice. Jackson died in 2009 at the age of 50 (Roberts 2019, 8).



Picture 15. Michael Jackson

Beyoncé

Beyoncé Giselle Knowles-Carter, known only as Beyoncé, is an American singer, songwriter, producer, dancer and actress. The singer comes from Texas and began her career in the girl group Destiny's Child, which turned out to be the biggest-selling female group of all time. In 2003, she took up a solo career. Today it is the world's best-selling superstar with many awards. Beyoncé is the most nominated woman in the Grammy Award's history, with 24 wins. Her husband is rapper Jay-Z and together they are considered the most influential couple in the world. Beyoncé has also gone through many crises, a tragic miscarriage or a hard break with her father, who was also her manager, Mathew Knowles. Among her best-known songs are *Single Ladies*, *If I Were A Boy* or *Spirit* from *Lion King*. In the 2012 presidential election, she elected Barack Obama. In the 2016 presidential election, she voted Hillary Clinton. Beyoncé fights for equality between men and women. It promotes same-sex marriage. Furthermore, she fights for the rights and equality of African-Americans and is strongly opposed to the brutality that still affects them, in particular by the police. She opposes the withdrawal of the protection of transgender students, which President Donald Trump wanted to cancel. The singer also organizes various charities, for example in the event of natural disasters or influences the citizens of America with her word in various political cases. It is clear that Beyoncé uses her wealth and influence for a good cause (Roberts 2017, 7, 9, 13, 15).

Ella Fitzgerald

Ella Jane Fitzgerald is the greatest jazz musician, sometimes nicknamed as Lady of Song, Queen of Jazz, and Lady Ella. Ella Fitzgerald is an example of when a poor girl fulfils the American Dream and overcomes the problems of her time, racial and sexual prejudice. She was famous for her clear voice, perfect intonation and improvisation. Her songs include *Dream and Little Dream of Me*, *Cheek to Cheek*, *Into Each Life Some Rain Must Fall*, and *It Don't Mean and Thing*. In 1996, after nearly 60 years of career, she died. She has won 14

Grammy Awards in her life, as well as the Presidential Medal of Freedom (Nicholson 1995, 13-15).

Whitney Houston

Whitney Elizabeth Houston was an American singer and actress. She was considered the most award-winning female artist ever and remains the best-selling artist of all time. In 1992, she debuted as an actress in movie *Bodyguard*, where she sang several soundtracks including *I Will Always Love You*, for which she won the Grammy Award for Album of the Year and became the best-selling single by a woman in music history. Her songs include *I Wanna Dance with Somebody* or *I'm Every Woman*. Whitney was a great philanthropist. She has organized many charities and founded the Whitney Houston Foundation for Children in 1989, which helped children with cancer and AIDS. On February 11, 2012, Houston died (Triumph Books 2012, 6, 8, 10).



Picture 16. Whitney Houston

The artists mentioned above have been, are or will be legends of popular music. Their successes are tremendous. Each of them differs in something, but they still emit something in common, perhaps the charisma typical for their ethnic group, such as strong voice, dancing skills or great-looking, imposing appearance.

4.6. Sports

4.6.1. General definition

Sports are a way to measure racial progress within the United States. It was an area where it was probably best to see how a torn nation could come together to overcome segregation and racism. However, this does not mean that athletes have not gone through a wave of hate in the past. It is clear how many sports talents have not been discovered due to skin colour prejudices. Breaking the colour barrier generally is invoked by Jackie Robinson, who was the first African American of the modern era to become a Major League Baseball player, ending 60 years of segregated Negro Leagues. In fact, African Americans are great athletes in general, enumerated as athletes, sprinters or boxers (Wiggins 2018, 1-5).

4.6.2. Concrete sportsman, sportswoman, types of a sport

The sports giants selected for analysis into popular culture are as follows. The reason for my choice was again the amount of successes achieved by athletes, their relationship to the topic of racism and segregation and their contribution to sports during a period of popular culture.

Serena Williams

Serena Jameka Williams is an American professional tennis player. She is considered one of the best female athletes of all time. At the age of seventeen, she became the first African American woman to win a Grand Slam tournament in 41 years. Williams has also made a mark on the world through charity work with her organization, the Serena Williams Fund, and UNICEF. At the beginning of her career, she played with her sister, also a tennis player, Venus. They were nicknamed Williams Sisters. Now she is one of the most winning tennis players and the best-paid sportswomen. Serena Williams has appeared on the front pages of well-known magazines such as Vogue, Harper's

Bazaar. She has also become the face of many sports brands, but has also appeared in advertising (Lawrence Corbett 2020, 11-12).



Picture 17. Serena Williams

Muhammad Ali

Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr., more known as Muhammad Ali, was an American professional boxer, activist and philanthropist. He was nicknamed The Greatest. Ali is considered one of the most significant and celebrated sports figures of the 20th century and one of the greatest boxers of all time. He was a great figure especially for African-Americans during the Civil Rights Movement. As a muslim, he supported the integration of this religion. He fought famine. He was involved in aid in Africa, for example in 1994 persuading the government to help refugees affected by the Rwandan genocide. Muhammad Ali starred in the sports documentary *When We Were Kings* in 1996. He also starred in *I am Ali* or *Facing Ali*. He is also the author of books like *The Greatest: My Own Story* or *The Soul of a Butterfly* (Eig 2017, 2).

Jackie Robinson

Jack Roosevelt Robinson was an American professional baseball player who became the first African American to play in Major League Baseball (MLB) in the modern era. Robinson broke baseball colour line when he started at the first base for Brooklyn Dodgers on April 15, 1947. Since 1880, he was the first African American in American professional baseball. Robinson contributed rapidly to the Civil Rights Movement at his time due to his undeniable talent and nonviolence. After his death in 1972, Robinson was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal and the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his achievements. He was born in the South. He was the son of sharecropper. Part of his life struggled against poverty and racism to uphold the beliefs instilled in his mother - faith in family, education, America, and God. Sports were one aspect of his life. He did business ventures, his leading role in the community, his early support of Martin Luther King Jr., his commitment to the civil rights movement at a crucial stage in its evolution; his controversial associations with Kennedy, Nixon, Humphrey, Goldwater, Nelson Rockefeller, and Malcolm X. Robinson portrayed himself in the 1950 motion picture *The Jackie Robinson Story*. He also starred in movie *The Torch of Friendship* in 1960 (Robinson 2003, 9-12).



Picture 18. Jackie Robinson

Michael Jordan

Michael Jeffrey Jordan is an American professional basketball player. He was one of the most effectively marketed athletes of his generation. He played 15 seasons in the NBA, winning six championships with the Chicago Bulls. Jordan received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama at the White House. He is the holder of two gold medals from the Olympic Games - 1984 and 1992. Michael Jordan teamed up with Nike to create Jordan sneakers under his name. In 1996 he starred in the film *Space Jam*. He has worked with companies like Nike, Coca-Cola, Chevrolet or McDonald's. He is the author of several books such as *Driven from Within, For the love of the game: my story, I can't accept not trying: Michael Jordan on the pursuit of excellence* (Porter 2007, 11-14).

Rubin "Hurricane" Carter

Rubin Carter, nicknamed Hurricane, was an American Canadian middleweight boxer. For 22 years, he was wrongly convicted of the murder of two men and one woman in prison. The original punishment was a lifetime. He was sentenced by a white jury. The review took place in 1985, when Carter was released and became a symbol of racial injustice. In 1999's *The Hurricane*, Denzel Washington played Carter. Carter wrote an autobiography titled *The Sixteenth Round*, written while he was in prison, published in 1975 by Warner Books. He was also the inspiration for Bob Dylan for the song *Hurricane*. After his life in prison, he was executive director of the Association in Defence of Wrongly Convicted (AIDWYC) from 1993 until 2005. Rubin Carter wrote his biography titled *The Sixteenth Round: From Number 1 Contender to Number 45472* (Hirsch 2000, 359-360).

At first, the imbalance between the number of men and women is evident. African-American men are more successful in sports than African-American women are. As the women's representative, I only mentioned Serena Williams.

5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this bachelor thesis has been met. African-Americans were introduced in popular culture as requested. I have an idea of the history of African-Americans and their role in popular culture. We can see progress that is striking. On the other hand, we can still see tendencies that put African-Americans in second place, up to "second-citizenship". This is also true in popular culture. The success achieved by one African-American is essentially a success for the whole ethnic group. The ratio of African Americans versus non-blacks who have taken hold of or succeeded in popular culture is still unbalanced and the predominance of non-blacks is enormous.

The bachelor thesis contains only a brief history and a few representatives of popular culture. It could be expanded by more detailed examples from history, such as the ways of dealing with slaves or the extension of the achievements achieved by African Americans, especially during the 20th century, which brought them closer to non-black Americans. In addition, it would be possible to add other more successful performers who represent African-Americans in popular culture.

In my personal perspective, this topic has brought me personally closer to the problem of racism, which unfortunately still persists in America. I have found a greater connection between history and the present, why some things work that way and some things work that way.

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7 ABSTRACT

Bakalářská práce se zabývá mediálním portrétem Afro-Američanů v Americké populární kultuře. Jedním z cílů bylo zjistit současnou roli a image Afro-Američanů v populární kultuře. V první části této práce je stručně probraná historie týkající se pouze Afro-Američanů v USA. Tyto historické poznatky jsou důležité pro druhou část práce. V druhé části, je rozebrána samotné období populární kultury, její vysvětlení, sekce, představitelé i malá osobní percepce. Vše se dotýká pouze etnické skupiny Afro-Američanů. Z práce vyplývá, že progres v chápání Afro-Američanů jako rovných občanů Ameriky je rapidní, ale stále přetrvává skrytá diskriminace. Součástí práce jsou i obrázky pro lepší představivost.

8 RESUMÉ

This bachelor thesis deals with the media portrait of Afro-Americans in American popular culture. One of the goals was to find out the current role and image of Afro-Americans in popular culture. In the first part of this work is a brief history of only Afro-Americans in the US. This historical knowledge is important for the second part of the work. In the second part is analysed the period of popular culture, its explanation, sections, representatives and little personal perception. Everything affects only the ethnic group of Afro-Americans. The work suggests that progress in understanding African-Americans as equal citizens of America is rapid, but hidden discrimination remains. The work also includes pictures for better imagination.

9 APPENDICES

9. 1. Images

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