

The study of Racism and Identity in Nadine Gordimer's *July People*

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Nadine Gordimer was born for a family of white minorities on November 20, 1923 ; her dad was good Jewish, and her mom was good English. While dealing with the Politically-sanctioned racial segregation framework and the connection between racial gatherings in South Africa, this would affect and encourage her after that. In her adolescence, Gordimer began the first confrontation with racism. She realized that black children were not permitted in the library she frequented. (Gordimer, *Nobel Lecture* 4-5).

Despite having a minor education, she dedicated herself and writings to the development and improvement of her nation. Since her first books, *Oral History* and *July People*, she has "dedicated her career to writing collections dealing with the racial tension plaguing her home nation" (*Oral History*, p. 3). Nadine Gordimer is well known for several of her novels and short stories, such as *The Conservationist*, *Burger's Daughter*, *My Son's Story*, *The Soft Voice of the Serpent*, and *Jump, and Other Stories*, talks about her country's issues. These texts address the relationship between South Africa's ethnic groups, and sometimes with humor as in *The Conservationist*. As a general rule, Gordimer is the main essayist conceived of a non-South African parent who eventually "did not come back to the metropolitan culture that gave birth to empire literature. She stays in South Africa [as she thinks to be one of her individuals], determined to invent an identity for herself as an African writer"(Greenstein, p. 227). Her texts, although written in English, did not depict the English style, but presented the South African style with all its elements. They argued that she belongs to white people who are the source and inventors of racism and apartheid regime ; so how could she write about those she knows not well? Despite being a white, though, she did not define Africa as did other whites. Her fiction "possesses an exceptionally particular Africa"(Greenstein, p. 228), not an unfilled world arranged for white colonization, nor a pitiful spot of the contemporary politically-sanctioned racial segregation state. Gordimer's political point of view expressed in her writings, particularly in the *July People*, was based on what twentieth-century white English-speaking group she belonged to. The twentieth century was set apart by the rise of African patriotism and Afrikaner nationalism's achievement. In South Africa, English-speaking individuals were in a very hard position that is more like discrimination than any other notion. Because of the linguistic and cultural distinctions, they could not be part of Afrikaner nationalism nor could they be part of African nationalism because of their physical appearances. In *July People*, this uncomfortable condition is disclosed through Maureen's confusion as the novel's protagonist between either integrating in black culture like other family members, particularly her three kids, and rejecting her past life attitudes, or fleeing out and restoring her former prestigious life. Gordimer did not see herself as an English offspring, but "South African politics make her an" outsider "to the experience of most of her countrymen, and empire literature still haunts her fiction" (Greenstein, p. 227). In what you believe is your home, being an outsider leads her to embrace the British literary elements to describe her perspective of what is happening in

her nation. This position is because of the idea of the South African condition where there is "a book estimated by political powers as opposed to abstract powers" (Gordimer, *The Novel and the Nation in South Africa*, p. 33). She believes that the author, and she is one of them, should be interested in the important details of human life and should not limit him / herself to his / her cultural and ethnic backdrop in his / her own context. Nadine Gordimer, a South African nationalist, argued about the "super-identity" of South Africa (Gordimer, *The Novel and the Nation in South Africa*, p. 34). This super-identity was created because it was required by the South Africans to prevent crisis and division. The sensitivity of Gordimer to the mood and discourses of South Africa's present time is shown through her texts. One of her popular and influential novels is the *July People*.

July People: July People is one of the popular books of Nadine Gordimer. It was published as her very own translation of how it would finish in 1981 preceding the fall of the Apartheid regime. It was prohibited in Gordimer's own nation home South Africa after it was published. The novel is set in a fictional room where a civil war between blacks and whites is going on in South Africa. Whites lose their authority over blacks and their dominance. The creator arranges the Smales among high contrast at an unconscious time when the whites were unable to understand what was going on and the blacks were not sure what was going on. The Smales is a white family dwelling in a dark town in Johannesburg with their previous dark hireling as a war refugee. The novel is a nice sample of works by Nadine Gordimer that discuss and illustrate the behavior of whites towards blacks and how the latter react. It reflects the vision of the author and her quest for "her own African view in a nation with deepening black-and-white divisions..." (Greenstein, p. 228). The novel also reflects the writer's protest against the government's choice to use Afrikaans as the language of research in some African universities rather than English. This public action was aimed at reducing the access of the blacks to the wider globe and forcing them to recognize their condition as inferior by studying Apartheid's native language.

The *July People*, similar to some other novel by Nadine Gordimer, centers around the connection between the races delineated by the connection between Maureen, the hero, and other characters, in particular her servant July. The novel also reflects a energy balance change. "White individuals deprived of authority gradually and at the mercy of ever more powerful black men" (Leitao Vieira, p. 25). This shift could explain the situation that whites were taking on the blacks before, and it is clear from the first chapter that the black is always considered to be a white servant rather than anything he is their savior. The abnormal circumstance Maureen, the hero, sees on their first morning in the indigenous town, living in the place of the relative, "July, their worker, their host " (Gordimer,p. 23). Gordimer talks about a segregated culture in the *July People* that is presented and reflected in her fictional characters. In this job, it is not strictly restricted to physical separation when referring to the act of racism, but it is more emotional racism. This is because, in general, physical and mental racism go hand in hand; a person's racist acts are probably performed without thinking. In other words, they are performed carelessly, regardless of the outcomes of the behavior of the person. As far as physical separation is concerned, we notice two components that the novel describes whites and blacks as separate. The

first is their pre-war separation that we can perceive by describing their previous Johannesburg house. The second situation is when the Smales are residing in the house of July's mother-in-law in the village of July.

A mental racism and segregation accompany this physical segregation. Mental racism is reflected in Maureen's poor July behaviour. For fifteen years, Maureen has been July's boss and she still behaves like that. Although in her lecture she recognizes her act of saving them as she says in the book "Frog Prince, saviour, July"(JP, p. 11), she believes that it was his responsibility as a servant to do so. Gordimer saw Maureen as "the last pioneer lady" (Topping, p. 582) on the grounds that she was coordinated and thought about by men who were identified with her from dad to spouse, the black servant even in July, who took care of her and tried to keep her out of trouble and comfort. These deeds are "a typical colonial attitude-that the white woman has a guy who takes care of her"(Topping, p. 581). Maureen defines as a betrayal the shameful conduct and failure of Bam to save them from the scenario. Just as the reluctance of July to hunt down the weapon as the supreme protector of white power is a betrayal of their long-standing partnership, which she arrogantly presumed was based on their mutual consideration. During the apartheid era, female white mistresses, particularly educated, liberal ones represented by Maureen, were as culpable as masters of unconscious patriotism. The change she's made is so fast for Maureen's prestigious and racial value. The change in her past life's pattern leads her to "another moment, location, awareness" (JP, p. 29). Very soon after arriving in the village, she feels that she has been completely transformed: "She wasn't what she was. No fiction could compete with what she found she didn't know, couldn't have imagined or discovered through imagination "(JP, p. 29), which would explain the transformation of their lives and power from whites who thought they were superior to the former servants, the blacks.

Also, when she realizes that she is more dependent on July than on him, her dignity as a former boss is completely demolished. She believed of the moment before when she and his wife are used to giving charity to him. Subsequent to drawing near to them, however, she understands that they don't require what she thought they were doing. Maureen feels compelled to modify her behavior towards him as she finds another version of her past, the version of July. Although she is persuaded to alter her ideas and attitudes, to justify her actions, Maureen always has self-justification and recrimination. Maureen, however, is trying to comprehend why July helped them escape the city's apocalypse. What she could see he's "not a easy man"(JP, p. 60). Because of her perspective of him as inferior without any complexity in his lives, this simplicity, which she believed he was, is like a civilized and a member of the upper class (white). Also, due to the impact of his native language and accent, she could not even comprehend him because of the awkward not perfect English of his servant. In addition to all these deeds towards July, Maureen and even her husband Bam are acting rudely with him, particularly when he refuses to do anything. For instance, Maureen blames July for taking minor items from her in Johannesburg when July will not take care of the lost weapon. This charge is because she sees herself as the master who has all that her servant wants to steal. Her husband Bam, besides Maureen, treats July as inferior. This action is mainly due to his loss of property and position. Once his "cheque-book" and prestigious career as an architect is meaningless in the village economy, he loses his authority and status. Bam is emasculated by losing his belongings, as he is seen after the valuable weapon is found stolen: "He lay

on his back, on that bed ... furthermore, all of a sudden moved over his face, as the dad had never done his children ... She looked down on that individual who had nothing, presently. Prior to these children there was something much more terrible than seeing the wide posteriors of ladies, squatting."(JP, p. 25). Left with only shame, since without his cash, career, car, and weapon he is undefined as a person, he suddenly relinquishes his duties and earlier morals. All in all, the idea of prejudice was talked about through the *July People* by the Smales couple's activities and mentalities towards their dark hireling July and his kin in general. Whether to live apart from them, to act differently. Whether acting differently by living apart from them, and even underestimating their culture and manner of life.

July's People's notion of identity is split into two components: black identity and white identity. The book depends on the two battle. The two essential heroes are the delegates of every personality, July and Maureen. Maureen endeavoured to carry on with racial domination and prevalence as she utilized over do, however July reacted distinctively as he had done for fifteen years of his service. To her superiority, he became more complicated and aggressive. The first sign of black identity in the novel, however, is its title "*July People*." It informs us that we should explore and find these blacks. The black identity is increasingly disclosed through the novel. The novel's first sight of black identity in South Africa is the Maureen-July connection: the master-servant relationship. Blacks were considered a servant, a easy servant. Or what Gordimer said as "the fairly paid and placated male hireling, living in their yard since they were hitched, wearing two arrangements of regalia ... allowed his companions to visit him and his city spouse to lay down with him in his room" (JP, p. 11). This would make the blacks dependent on whites, but truth was the reverse as the Smales couples discover how much they depended on their servant through the novel.

Also, Maureen was shocked by the tribal structure of the black with her usual perspective of the social system centered on the family rather than the tribe. This scheme is recognized throughout the African continent, with particular circumstances and quality for each tribe. When Maureen woke up in the village of July on her first day, she realized that some brightness traced the tribal hut (JP, p. 3). To survive with nature instead of depending on the white stuff and manner of life. Even in the construction of their buildings, they rearrange their "small funds around the bases of nature, let the walls of mud sink back into mud and then use that mud for fresh walls ... "(JP, p. 31). This type of architect used by Africans destroys the white architectural values that Bam represents as a white architect. Thus, the white identity is humiliated and became nonsense with the preservation of the black identity. Besides the individuals of July adhere to their way of life and personality, when they interfaced with the blacks, the Smales adhere to their white culture turned out to be less, aside from Maureen who felt compromised by black culture. Her daughter Gina became better acquainted with black culture and performed without any complicated with black women. She even eats "mealie-supper with her fingers" with other little ladies from a mutual pot (JP, p. 47). Even the dad took part in the lives of the village. Bam is talking to other males and trying to get him to understand. In addition, toward Maureen, July became more aggressive. He gradually resists her, showing barely suppressed views through language that does not fear for the first moment:

Me? I must know who is stealing your things? Same like always. You make too much trouble for me. Here in my home too. Daniel, the chief, my-mother-my-wife with the house. Trouble, trouble from you. I don't want it anymore. You see? His hands flung out away from himself. You've got to get it back. No no. No no. Hysterically smiling repeating... She was stampeded by a wild rush of need to destroy everything between them. (JP, p. 26)

It was his response to this stance as he felt free from her service. Maureen couldn't pay him, and whenever she paid him, he served her. He thought he was free from her when she couldn't, and he knew he wasn't going to be in a bad situation because he wasn't a slave. He was just a servant who, if there is no work for the Smales, would find another job. The *July People* is a novel by Nadine Gordimer. Her environment affected the author, and her writing was merely a response to what she lived. In a fictional room where the black rebelled against the Apartheid regime, the novel presents South Africa's lives. A white family, Smales, escaped their black slave village from the conflict in Johannesburg. We notice a lot of indications of racism through the novel. Racism is shown to their servant July and his individuals through the actions of Maureen and her husband. We also note *July People* response to ward off those activities that have been through their behavior as they are and do not imitate the white way of life.

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