

**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**  
**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**  
**University Abdelhamid Ibn Badis**  
**Faculty of Foreign Languages**  
**Department of English**



**Racial Passing in the US of Today:  
From Nella Larsen (1929) to Danzy Senna  
(1998)**

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of Master in  
Literature and Interdisciplinary Approaches**

**Submitted By**  
**SOUFI Amira**

**Board:**

**Chairperson: Mrs. Fouzia Bakkadouri**

**Supervisor: Mrs. Yasmina Djafri**

**Examiner: Mrs. Amel GHARMAOUI**

**2018-2019**

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to:

My beloved mother without whom I would not have reached this point

My precious sisters who were a great help all the way long

My friends YAHIA PASHA Djamila, HAOUA Hlima, ZIAN Nacera, SILARBI Halima,  
BERKAN Nadjat

My best friend Imad Eddine Belkacemi who was very patient, kind and supportive during  
the writing of this dissertation

Mr TEGUIA Cherif for his encouragement

And all my friends with no exception.

## **Acknowledgments**

This research would not have been possible without the aid of my dearest supervisor *Yasmina Djafri*. Thanks to her great help and advice this work came to life and could be accomplished.

I am also grateful to my Afro-American Literature teacher Mrs Abdelhadi Nadia who was the source of inspiration of this research.

I am also greatly indebted to Mrs. Benmaati for her great contribution in the progress of this research.

My heartfelt thanks go to my friend Si Larbi Halima who has been a great help to me, she was the one who taught me how to use the PC and helped me with methodology.

Finally, I would express my gratitude to all of my teachers of English especially Mr. Larbi Youcef Abd Eljalil. Their efforts and encouragements would never be forgotten.

## **Abstract**

Much has been said and written recently about racism in all its forms, and how people confronted to such situations would react to avoid it. Racial passing was one of the means African-Americans adopted to escape racism and discrimination. *Passing* (1929), a novella written by the African-American writer Nella Larsen and *From Caucasia, With Love* (1998), a novel written by the American writer Danzy Senna, are two selected works of literature meant to show how and why people were passing for white from the past to the present. In this respect, the present dissertation aims to show that racial passing still exists in the United States of America; a supposedly post-racial country which celebrates difference.

**Key words:** Racism, Racial Passing, Post-Racism.

## Table of Content

Dedication.....	I
Acknowledgements.....	II
Abstract.....	III
Table of Contents.....	IV
General Introduction.....	1

### Chapter One: Racial Passing: A Historical Background

Introduction.....	3
1. The Transatlantic slave trade.....	3
2. Slavery.....	5
3. One Drop Rule.....	7
4. Interracial Marriages.....	9
5. Great Migration.....	14
6. Jim Crow Laws.....	15
Conclusion.....	19

### Chapter Two: Biracial Identity Formation

Introduction.....	20
1. Passing.....	20
1.1. RacialPassing.....	23
2.Race.....	23
3.Ethnicity.....	26
4. Identity.....	28
4.1. Personal Identity.....	29
4.2. Social Identity.....	29
4.3. Biracial Identity.....	30

4.3.1. Biracial Identity Development.....	30
Conclusion.....	32

### **Chapter 3: Passing from Nella Larsen to Danzy Senna**

Introduction.....	33
1. Nella Larsen.....	33
2. <i>Passing</i> (1929).....	34
3. Danzy Senna.....	39
4. <i>From Casasia, With Love</i> (1998).....	40
5. Passing from Nella Larsen to Danzy Senna.....	47
Conclusion.....	51
General Conclusion.....	52

## General Introduction

After a long struggle for equality and integration, African-Americans are still facing problems of racism and discrimination in a supposedly post-racial America that was marked by the permission of interracial marriages in 1964. The arrival of slaves to the new world and the contact with white people led to the birth of mulattoes; a category of people with lighter skin complexion that enables them to pass for white without being exposed. This process was called Racial Passing. It was adopted by mulattoes for the sake of gaining more privileges and acceptance.

Racial Passing was used as a plot by many writers especially those of the Harlem Renaissance such as James Weldon Johnson in his book *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*(1912), *Quicksand*(1928) and *Passing*(1929) by Nella Larsen and Charles W. Chesnutt's novel: *The House Behind the Cedars*(1900.) These literary works aimed at highlighting how dangerous racism was in America to the extent that it led people renounce everything they had for the smallest rights.

This research paper aims at introducing the concept of "passing." Through both novels, namely *Passing* and *From Caucasia, with Love* the writers attempt to highlight how characters were passing and how their passing affected them psychologically. Besides, it also aims at proving that passing for white still exists in the United States of America.

It is hypothesized that black white Americans are still passing for white for hopes of equality, integration or even acceptance by the whites in a multi-racial America which is considered as post-racial for over two decades. The research objectives are set to investigate the two novels *Passing* and *From Caucasia, with love* by comparing the

difference in passing and analysing it respectively. The following question is at the core of this research:

Does racial passing still exist in the current time?

This dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter deals with the possible events that led to the appearance of racial passing and the category of Mulattoes, the reactions of the American law and religion towards the increasing numbers of such category. The second chapter deals with concepts like identity, ethnicity and the difference between them. It also deals with biracial identity and its construction. Additionally, it aims to show and which people could be subject of racial passing. The third chapter analyses both *Passing* (1929) by Nella Larsen and *From Caucasia, With Love* (1998) by Danzy Senna to show the difference between Racial Passing during segregation and after.



**Chapter One:**  
**Historical Background of racial**  
**Passing**

# Chapter 1

---

## Introduction

Despite the long fight African Americans have been through to ask for equality, appreciation, and stand against the white's racism and prejudices, they were still facing an endless discrimination that made most of them or those who could pass for white escape blackness, notably the Mulattoes<sup>1</sup> category. This chapter is devoted to clarify "Passing"<sup>2</sup> as a phenomenon that appeared in the United States of America and the events that led to its emergence.

## 1. The Transatlantic Slave Trade

Slavery existed long before history started to be recorded. The Transatlantic Slave trade lasted four centuries between the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> and was responsible for the forced migration of 12 million people from Africa to the new world (Emmer, n.d.) It consisted in the shipping of the captured black people after being sold to white merchants through the Atlantic Ocean to the American colonies to serve as slaves, where they were subjected to different forms of servitude based on their physical strength (Nolen, n.d.)

Portugal was the first known country in transporting slaves from Africa (15<sup>th</sup> century) followed by other European powers such as France and Britain. The route was called "The Triangular Trade" which had four directions involved: from Europe to Africa carrying tobacco, weapons, and textile. From Africa to Europe carried with slaves and raw materials. From Europe to America deporting mostly slaves to the new world to work on plantations and then From America back to Europe with manufactured products highly demanded such as tobacco, sugar and cotton (Lewis, n.d.)

---

<sup>1</sup>A category of people appeared in the United States of America as a result to interracial marriages, especially that of blacks and whites. The word passing will be used capitalized

<sup>2</sup> The ability of one person to move from one race to another thanks to his physical appearance.

# Chapter 1

---

The voyage that used to take six to eight weeks was called the Middle Passage. It caused thousands of blacks to die even before their arrival to the Americas; mostly pregnant women and sick people were the first to die because of the hard conditions on ships, where they were chained like animals inside the ship. It was rare to see these slaves show any form of rebellion against the ship's crew. The ones who did rebel or went into food strikes, were quickly crushed by throwing the former out of the ships and force feeding the latter. Small amounts of food were given to the rest. Those who were rebelling against such treatment were thrown off the ship or killed in front of the other slaves to frighten them (Emmer, n.d.)

Most of the transported Africans were not slaves in their home countries. Encouraged by Arabs and Europeans, local Africans became interested in providing both of them with other Africans by kidnapping them or keeping them as war captives and ultimately enslaving them. These slaves were used as market products by African chiefs who sold them at different prices taking their physical appearance and strength into consideration (Adi, n.d.) Merchants at the beginning preferred to buy only males because they were stronger, but African chiefs obliged them to buy women as part of the agreement. After that, a growing demand was on black females for the sexual needs of black slaves in the new world and to increase the number of slaves since slave women gave birth to a slave. (Rutagaram, n.d.) These women were also used for the sexual entertainment of their masters, for the former were known for having beastly sexuality (Lay, 166.)

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, slave trade came to its end. This was due to various reasons. Northern white people started to protest against the system of enslaving and using black people in an unhuman way. In addition to that, a group of people emerged asking their government to end slave trade. Such people were called the abolitionist and the resistance of blacks made a noticeable contribution too. The most successful slave

# Chapter 1

---

rebellion, called self liberation in 1771, was in the French colony of St Domingue, now Haiti and that led to the creation of the first modern black republic. Haiti was the first country to acknowledge the human rights of its citizens (Understanding Slavery, n.d.) Denmark was the first country to abolish slave trade in 1803. Then they were followed by Britain in 1807, to be later followed by other European countries. Not to mention that despite such positive contribution in the lives of blacks (Understanding Slavery, n.d.) Slavery did not end overnight. In fact, there were still some white merchants who kept smuggling illegally black slaves to Brazil until the emancipation act was enacted in 1888 (Lewis, n.d.)

## 2. Slavery

The most common definition of slavery by Richard Hellie is “one person owned by another legally, she/he has less or no right as a free wo/man.” (n.d.) Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave trade could be considered as a landmark to the emergence of “passing”. History shows that slavery existed centuries ago in all parts of the world and it was not restricted only to white people enslaving blacks. In fact, there were cases of white men enslaving other white men as in the case of the hundreds of Irish men who were enslaved by whites in different colonies of the New World. However, there was a clear difference between the way white slaves were treated in comparison to the way black slaves were treated. Indeed, Irish men were known to be savage, though they were not discriminated or considered as inferior like the black ones (Smedly, n.d) and that would confirm that their skin colour was the issue.

# Chapter 1

---

In 1619, a Dutch ship brought 20 Africans to the Colony Virginia as indentured servants<sup>3</sup> (Hellie, n.d.) After that, trade expanded because of the profit Americans gained from such commerce; leaving to death larger numbers of slaves brought for the sake of serving whites either at home or in plantation (Boddy-Evans, n.d.) Through time, other means of servitude appeared especially for women; sexual relations between African enslaved women and their white masters regardless of whether a female was married, still a child or even old, and any objection from the part of slaves would be faced with punishment and other forms of abuse.

“A Birth of a Nation” is a film in which blacks’ hardship and abuse were openly reflected. It is a story of a man called Nat Turner. Nat gathered with other slaves to rebel against the whites’ treatment of slaves and most importantly women. Such kind of treatment, obliged Nat, with the assistance of other slaves, to revenge and kill all white men in the area. Nat Turner’s rebellion frightened the local authorities who would consequently start passing more acts to constrain blacks, and strengthen segregation (Mcnamara, n.d.)

The end of the nineteenth century marked the end of Slave Trade and Slavery due to the opposing parts especially Americans and British such as Baptists<sup>4</sup>, Quakers<sup>5</sup>, religious groups asking for the end Slave Trade and enslavement of Africans. The Emancipation Proclamation was issued by Abraham Lincoln in 1863 He declared “*all persons held as slaves in any State, or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever*

---

<sup>3</sup>Indentured servants are servants brought from Africa and other countries; they would work for five or seven years, depending on the contract. At the end of their servitude they will be free and given a piece of land by their masters (Smedly 2013).

<sup>4</sup>« a member of a Christian group that believes that baptism should not happen until a person is old enough to ask for it and to understand its meaning » *batist*, dictionary.cambridge.org, accessed on, 12/06/2019

<sup>5</sup>It is a person who is part of a religious group called the Society of Friends. Quaker, collinsdictionary.com, accessed on, 12/06/2019

# Chapter 1

---

*free.*” This statement did not end slavery. So, there was a need for a constitutional decision to confirm the end of enslaving people. The 13th amendment was then passed by the Senate on April 8, 1864, but did not pass in the house till Jan 31, 1865. It was finally ratified on December 06, 1865 (Wallenfeldt, n.d.)

Following the thirteenth amendment, the 14th and 15th amendments were meant to give more rights and freedom to blacks. However the amendments revealed to be insufficient and incapable of changing the status of African-Americans because they were still suffering from discrimination and unfairness. Though their rights were guaranteed on paper but socially were not that apparent. However and despite the set backs it was still a huge step forward in the history of Africans living in America as compared to whites but it was a step forward in the history of Africans living in America, a transitional stage in their lives and a good omen for another challenge.

### 3. One Drop Rule

Who is a black? Is a title of an essay written by F. James Davis that one needs to be aware of its answer; it might seem for some that a black is a person with dark skin, while it is more than skin colour. It is about genes or black blood, even if it is not apparent on the exterior. In the antebellum<sup>6</sup> years, colored people with even darker complexion were considered legally white under the condition of being free (n.d.)

Hypo-descent rule, Traceable amount rule, One black ancestor rule, are different appellations for the concept one drop rule that appeared in the nineteenth century legalized in the twentieth. It was legalized in Tennessee in 1910 and later under the Racial Integrity Act 1924, Virginia (Rey, n.d.) It is according to Sola Rey “*associated with Invisible*

---

<sup>6</sup>“Antebellum means “before the war” but it wasn’t widely associated with the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865) until after that conflict was over” Antebellum. Meriam Webster, 1828, [www.meriam-webster.com/dictionary/antibellum](http://www.meriam-webster.com/dictionary/antibellum)

# Chapter 1

---

*Blackness*'' (n.d.) referring to descendents of mixed races specially those of Black and White, one drop rule is defined as a widely spread legal and social measurement in the era of slavery- that classified people according to their race; simply put: If one person has even one drop of blood that belongs to a black ancestor. It would make him black; even with a higher white heritage. The emphasis was put to insist on the idea of Racism, the inferiority of blacks to other races.

Religion could be a reason for the reinforcement of the widely spread idea of the one drop rule especially by the white southerners. Later generalized and backed up by authorities. Hypodescent-rule was among the reasons that pushed lighter skinned people, Mulattoes to pass for white secretly thanks to their physical features that helped them much (Davis, n.d.)

The first Mulatto was born after one year of the coming of the first Africans in America; Virginia colony in 1620 (Smedly 2013.) Mulattoes appeared within slavery, they started discovering their abilities of passing to white; authorities were frightened from the contamination of their blood by the black one. Therefore laws were passed and practiced to prevent any attempt of mixing with the other race that of White.

The idea of one-drop rule was practiced in many countries, but more focussed and developed in America especially in the South (Wieland, n.d.) Colored people before the Antebellum were classified on the basis of their colour and society acceptance. At that time African-Americans did not have clear historical clues about their ancestors. It is most believed that Thomas Jefferson himself was a father of six mixed children from his own slave Sally Hemings; a mixed woman. They were legally considered white according to Virginia law at that time. In 1967 the one-drop rule was declared by the United States Supreme Court, unconstitutional (Rey, n.d.)

# Chapter 1

---

## 4. Interracial Marriages

It is defined as the marriage of people from different races, Ethnic groups, Cultures, Backgrounds (Teasly, n.d.) The first recorded miscegenation was that of Matandoaka known as the famous Pocahontas and John Rolfe in 1614 (Nelson, n.d.) The term “miscegenating” was first used in 1863 New York pamphlet, derived from Latin words; miscere (to mix) and gnus (race) (Lay, 166.)

Several laws have been passed to separate the different races from being mixed. White people were frightened of the fact that their race in case of mixing would be contaminated by other inferior bloods. Claims of God himself separated races meant that there was no need of mixing and if any one attempts to do that is committed of adultery. The prohibition of white and black, or whites and any one from other race from having any relations carried the name of anti-miscegenation laws (Lay, 166.)

Anti-Miscegenation Laws were applied to preserve the purity of the white race. Both interracial sex and intraracial marriages were prohibited to preserve real racial boundaries between blacks and whites. Rape was also illegal; it was more focussed on black men raping white women. The fear of the offsprings coming from such relations; those children of lighter skin who were called Mulattoes made another reason of prohibiting such mixing (Lay, 167.)

During slavery, the fact of having children from black men and white women was discouraged; their kids were likely to be white or light skinned. On the contrary having children from black women and white men was highly encouraged because they will offer extra free slaves, since the child follows his mother’s social status, like W.E.B. Du Bois has argued the slave owners used slave women for their own pleasure and to increase the number of slaves(Lay, 167.)



## Chapter 1

---

In 1691 Virginia passed a law to punish women who brought mixed children by imposing penalties of 15 pound sterling on them, or put them under servitude for five years, the son she brings is also obliged to be a servant till he reaches the age of thirty (Lay, 167.) White women having mixed children were considered sinners and bad because they did not respect their social standards. In contrast to men, women were harshly punished for having interracial sex but the punishment for having interracial marriage was equal for both males and females (Lay, 167.)

In 1916, Madison Grant, a New York attorney and officer of the American Eugenics Society, wrote a book which attempted to explain the consequences of Racial Mixing on European Civilization:

When it becomes thoroughly understood that the children of mixed marriages between contrasted races belong to the lower type, the importance of transmitting in unimpaired purity the blood inheritance of ages will be appreciated at full value, and to bring half-breeds into the world will be regarded as a social and racial crime of the first magnitude. The laws against miscegenation must be greatly extended if the higher races are to be maintained (cited in. Lay, 171.)

Grant here means that the mulatto category is an evidence of the contamination of the long heritage of pure white blood. For him, it was a priority and a necessity to preserve such heritage and the mixing with other races specifically the black one meant the destruction of the white civilization. There was a belief that those children of mixed races are lower in status than both whites and blacks (Lay, 171.)

Starting from the late 1600's century anti-miscegenation laws started to be passed mainly in the south, Maryland, Virginia, expanded later on to the north Massachusetts, Pennsylvania before and after the American revolution (Lay, 166.) At the end of

# Chapter 1

---

reconstruction anti-miscegenation laws were reapplied in some southern states. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the ban of interracial marriages was reinforced more than ever; the belief that blacks are inferior to whites were still in process despite the fact that slavery was abolished. Though separate but equal laws were passed; blacks were still called uncivilized and savage. Blacks were attacked by the notorious Ku Klux Klan; an organization of southern white men formed in 1865 to kill, torture and beat black people who were seeking for equality, integration or any sort of blending with whites (teenVOGUE, n.d.)

The first Anti-Miscegenation law passed was in Virginia. 1664 declaring that the punishment of having intracial sex would be twice harsher than interracial marriage, followed by 1664 Maryland law passage, prohibiting marriage between blacks and whites. The 1872 witnessed the striking down of Miscegenation in Alabama under the passage of the fourteenth amendment, that of equality between races which was reversed quickly (Reddick, n.d.)

By 1914, forty one states had Anti-Miscegenation laws. After the passage of the Civil Rights Act 1866/1875; the value of miscegenation laws was put into question. In 1924, Virginia passed the Racial Integrity Act (Reddick, n.d.) this law codified individuals as white if they had no trace of Negro blood, only caucasian; meaning that all other people having even a single black drop of blood or any other race are not to be considered white with the exception of the descendants of the so called pocohontas only child because they were elite (Nelson, n.d.)

Richard Loving a white man and Mildred Jeter of mixed race were in love. They were living in a small community in Virginia. Richard and Mildred met when they were still students in separate segregated schools. Interracial marriage in Virginia was prohibited. So, the couple went to Colombia and got married there in 1958 at the age of 18 and 24. Despite the fact that they possessed marriage license, the Loving couple were

## Chapter 1

---

arrested in the middle of the night after their arrival to Virginia. The couple was accused of violating the ban of interracial marriages; they both were sentenced to one year of prison suspended if they leave Virginia for 25 years. Mildred and Richard did leave Virginia. They moved to Washington and had three children (Kelly, n.d.)

In a visit to Virginia in 1963, the couple was caught, considered guilty under the opinion of God creating people with different races in different parts of the world, means that, by doing so, he did not intend them to mix and children they brought, were called bastards. The couple appealed to the supreme court of Virginia. The court supported the Anti-Miscegenation law and confirmed that they were guilty. The use of the fourteenth amendment to prove that this marriage is part of equality was not correct; the amendment had nothing to do with marriage. They were equally punished with no regard to their races (Lay, 177.) Then, they appealed to the U.S. supreme court, Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote concerning Loving's case: « *The freedom to marry or not marry a person of another race resides with the individual* », « *and cannot be infringed by the state* » (cited in teenVOGUE, n.d.)

Loving v. Virginia was not just a victory for interracial marriage of blacks with whites only. It was a victory for all races. Interracial sex and marriage are no longer a sin or a crime. Kids they brought, no matter their colour was, were not looked at as illegitimate bastards. It is now up to the person to choose his sexual partner with no feelings of fear. The fact of outlawing such rule made the public gradually accept interracial romance. Also it contributed to the growing encouragement of the Civil Rights Movement; black and white people stood together for the same reason, blacks having their rights.

The end of Anti-Miscegenation laws does not mean the end of sexual racism. The long history of racism, discrimination, the sense of whites being superior to blacks, better than them made it, still making it difficult for interracial couples to live peacefully because

# Chapter 1

---

hostility is still there. Such attitudes caused them their occupations, kids and even families, though the unconstitutionality was generalized. Southerners did maintain racial hierarchy. Interracial couples were suffering since society did not accept them as ordinary couples and people even after long periods of marriage were not given the respect they deserved. Anti-Miscegenation Laws remained in books till the later half of the twentieth century according to a survey in 1991, one fifth of men were still thinking that interracial marriage should be illegal (Lay, 178-179.)

In 2009 Louisiana peace justice refused to marry an interracial couple for the sake of their future children, their claim was that, till today there are still individual and institutional racism, and those children the couple will bring would not have the same previous treatment confronted by interracial children but they still will have part of that (Rabkin, n.d.)

Anthropologists have proved that it is no longer an evidence of superiority to say “*racess are distinct types*” rather, one just needs to refer to as physical differences within different populations. To oppose Anti-Miscegenation laws, George D. Tillman Said in a discussion in 1895 in South Carolina

It is a scientific fact that there is not one full blooded caucasian on the floor of this convention. Every member has in him a certain mixture of... colored blood...it would be a cruel injustice and the source of endless litigation, of scandal, horror, feud and bloodshed to undertake to annule or forbid marriage for a remote, perhaps obsolete trace of Negro blood. The doors would be open to scandal, malice, and greed (cited in Rey n.d.)

In other words, Tillman attempted to confirm that the purity of white race is only a myth and that it is the reason for limitless unfairness and problems between the two races (Rey, n.d.)

# Chapter 1

---

## 5. Great Migration

It was in from the 1916s to the 1970s African-Americans started migrating in huge numbers from the south for different reasons such as the revival of the Ku Klux Klan and their continuous attacks on black, the lack of working opportunities and the Jim Crow laws that were passed extensively in the southern side of America to restrict blacks from benefiting from their rights and the need of Northern states for labor during world war two. African-Americans headed to the North and West for the sake of a better life.

Scholars divided it in two major waves, the first one was from 1916 to 1930 and the second one was from 1940 to 1970. More than six million black people left their homes searching for better working conditions, salaries, escaping the exploitation they were facing because of sharecropping system they were obliged to follow; which was tiring and not profitable for farmers, especially after the boll weevil epidemic that caused massive crop damages in 1898.

After they arrived to the north, African-Americans worked as steel mills, railroads and factories; Pennsylvania rail road hired more than 10,000 African-American immigrants coming from the south. White southerners were frightened by the fleeing of their cheap labor. They tried to stop those who wanted to travel by arresting them in Railroads or tearing up their tickets. During the era of depression migration slowed then increased in World War 2; rates of people moving to the North witnessed an outburst for several decades.

People with lighter complexion were the ones who benefited the most, had more opportunities to pass for white, they blended with whites, marry them because their skin made it easier for them to be accepted by whites, to have the same privileges as whites. Studies have shown that African-Americans' DNA came from both African Ancestors and

# Chapter 1

---

European Ancestors. Mix genetic also showed that people living in the north have more African blood than those living in the south because of the great migration that reshaped not only the genetic system of Americans, but their lives as well (White, n.d.)

People who moved to the north were able to find jobs but they suffered from housing conditions because, they were still separated from whites, Southern African-Americans even faced difficulties with people from their own race because of their country manners.

Thanks to the Great Migration black people began to learn. They were able to go to libraries; they also started studying since it was allowed. People started enriching their minds, learning manners, developing their personal experiences as works of literature that disconfirmed white's stereotypes of black as being uneducated. Thanks to the Great Migration, African-Americans created their own communities that were independent from that of whites in all areas such as business, health and culture; Harlem Renaissance was the name of their intellectual movement; it was considered as one of the most important literary movements in the American literature.

## **6. Jim Crow Laws**

“Jump Jim Crow” or “Jumping Jim Crow” a name of a routine performed by Thomas Dartmouth Rice; a white northerner born in New York City in 1808. Dartmouth started performing an act in the early 1830's, he used to paint his face in black, wears dirty clothes and dance, he claimed that he was inspired by a slave he saw doing so.

Rice became very famous after that show. He even went in a tour doing the same show; for him and the viewers, that show reflected how enslaved Africans were living. Jim Crow Laws lasting for about 100 years were applied by the end of the Reconstruction Era just

# Chapter 1

---

after the ratification of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment that freed four million slaves in 1865, the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment that announced blacks as equals to whites, and the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment that gave African-Americans the right to vote.

It was till the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, Jim Crow finally reached its end. Jim Crow laws are defined as a set of laws passed mainly in the south to legalize racial segregation and discrimination. It was a sort of depriving blacks from their full citizenship, equality; a strategy to keep them marginalized and any attempt of resisting laws was faced by violence or even death. In 1904, the phrase Jim Crow Laws appeared in Newspapers.

The south is responsible for Jim Crow Laws enacted in all the 53 states in America; a common idea that lots of people have, The North is anti-slavery while the South is the source of these laws. In fact, Jim Crow was applied in different places by different forms. It came originally from the North which applied separation in public places; separate pews in churches, separate galleries in theatres, and later the separate Rail Roads Trains. The 19<sup>th</sup> century marked the universal use of the word Separation; it was the first time when the phrase “Seperate but Equal” started to be in use due to the case of Plessy V. Ferguson<sup>7</sup>. According to Golub the case of Plessy V. Ferguson marked the deep feelings of fear from racial passing and interracial marriages (n.d.)

Jim Crow did not exist in the south before the civil war, because slave holders needed not to be far from their slaves, close contact was necessary to maintain control. Now the slaves were emancipated, white supremists looked for a way-Jim Crow- not to lose their fight for superiority, not to let African-Americans gain status that would threaten

---

<sup>7</sup>in 1892, Homer Plessy a black man with lighter complexion; seven to eight caucasian, plessy refused to displace from a seat reserved for whites only in a train, his argument in court was that his right was violated and that Jim Crow Laws were unconstitutional. He lost the case because the supreme court ruled that as long as facilities are equal, it is acceptable to segregate blacks from whites and this decision was known as the “seperate but equal” ruling.

# Chapter 1

---

their interests. Laws started to be applied almost everywhere like parks, restaurants, theatre, cemeteries, barber shop and every place where both black and white people could meet, black codes were detailing how and where black could work to put them in a similar way to what they have been when they were slaves as indentured servants. Besides the fact that these laws were passed to prevent blacks from integration in the white community, other laws were passed to prevent blacks from joining electoral process by obliging them to pass poll tax; that Africans-Americans were too poor to pay, literacy tests that would guarantee their exclusion from voting and even if they succeeded to pass it. They would have been attacked by Klans and prevented from voting.

Jim Crow was not just a set of laws. It was a deeply rooted way of life for whites to the extent that the fear of mixing with blacks made them create an organization that attacked blacks and kept them away from rebelling against the law. According to Femi Lewis Ida B. Wells is an example of the brutality of Klans men. She started publishing about lynching and other forms of discrimination in her newspaper, *Free Speech and Headlight*, later her printing office was totally burnt by KKK.

Black codes also controlled black residences, means of transportation and even obliged children to labor. Blacks were fed up by such conditions, so they attempted to sue segregationists, but the system was already corrupt by police officers and judges who did their best not to let blacks win those cases. They treated as slaves when jailed and received harsh punishment as compared to their white counterparts, there were the ones who did not survive in jails and murdered by whites; members of the Ku Klux Klan. Black codes are often confused with Jim Crow Laws; the first represents a set of laws passed by southern states that restricted former slaves from having jobs, preventing them from having properties, whereas Jim Crow Laws were mainly about separating blacks and whites from public places.



# Chapter 1

---

Laws from different states were passed to control more how blacks lived and to keep them apart from whites. In 1870, Virginia law prohibited black children from attending schools with whites. Alabama passed a law segregating restaurants; black and white people were prevented to be served in the same room unless there is a different entrance so that they do not encounter and if they attend the same place, there should be a solid separation between them from ground up to seven feet. Arizona also passed a law concerning marriage; any person with caucasian blood is not allowed to marry with another person of a different race. Florida passed a law prohibiting any two persons of different race to live together, or have any sexual relation; both will be punished of being jailed for 12 months or pay a fine of five hundred Dollars. Other laws were enacted in all states with different degrees of racism to keep blacks as second-class citizens.

The harshness of Jim Crow laws made life difficult especially for mulattoes who did not know to which side they should belong. They found themselves passing for white as a choice of their own to achieve better conditions, treatment and mostly acceptance, and some of them were obliged to pass to escape horror minor races and especially blacks were facing.

Post-world war two marked the end of the known Jim Crow Laws witnessing an increase in the quest of voting rights by black activists confirming blacks having the right to vote. There were significant dates that marked such success. In 1948 integration in the military was ordered by Harry Truman and the same year Educational Segregation was ruled unconstitutional in the case of Brown V. Board of Education. The Civil Rights Act that ended discrimination that had been legalized by Jim Crow Laws was signed by Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964. By the 1965 The Voting Rights Act was passed to guarantee minorities the right to vote. 1968 was the year of passing The Fair Housing Act that ended

# Chapter 1

---

discrimination in selling and renting houses. It was the end of Jim Crow but not the end of racism or full integration.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, the reader has been introduced to the term passing, the Mulattoes as a race and how they appeared in America mainly and the reasons that led to the spread of this phenomenon. As a conclusion, Passing, a concept, phenomenon, or an issue that occurred in the United States of America since the beginning of slavery, in the second chapter more will be said and Races and more specifically racial passing evolved through time as a means by mulattoes to escape racism and discrimination Africans-Americans were facing in a white community.

**Chapter Two:**  
**Biracial identity formation**

## Chapter Two

---

### Introduction

Lighter skinned people took advantage of their complexion to escape through Racial Passing Racism which was and still is the most powerful concept that controls how people treat one another Race was a kind of plan that everyone knew was used to classify nations in terms of power. This chapter aims to define the concept Passing and highlights the concepts of Race and Ethnicity. It also gives an idea about biracial identity and its components and construction

### 1. Passing

A common definition an easily accessed one of the term passing is:

The act of moving toward and beyond something. In other words, it is the transition from one stage to another (dictionary.com, 2019.)

The question that comes to mind when referring to Passing<sup>8</sup> beyond terminology; as phenomenon that actually took place, had causes and consequences is: when did the Passing appear?

Charls-Arnold Kurr Van Gennep, a German-born, French; is the father founder of the notion of passing in his famous study « Rites of Passage » in 1909. He was the one who coined this phrase; which means according to good reads : « A transition stage of man's life, it could be from one social group to another, or from childhood to maturity, or any other kind of life stage that would be marked by a celebration. » (Van Gennup, n.d., cited in. NWE, 2016) this means that it is a change that a person goes through like; from being a child to a mature, from birth to death. It is the transformation from one stage to another.

---

<sup>8</sup> The term Passing would be used some times capitalized others not to distinguish the phenomenon from the verb.

## Chapter Two

---

Later, the concept started to include other changes such as from one race to another, one class to another or even from one sex to another.

Van Gennep introduced the concept of “liminality”, from a latin word “Limen” which means a threshold that denotes the description of the starting point of a new phase, leaving the previous behind and marking that transition by a celebration. This period of transition makes the person confused, feels ambiguous, and suffers from a fade in identity, wondering to which side he belongs; not being able to be loyal to the previous stage or adopts the new one without the feeling of guilt. Gennep also focused on the idea that society should not be an obstacle in the transition and let the person move naturally without being dominated, without losing one’s individual freedom. There should be an understanding for the need of time, and a recognition of the existence of “Liminality” itself (NWE, 2016.)

Since Van Gennep coined this phrase “Rites of Passage”; it started to be used in anthropology and sociology. In 1909 Van Gennep published his most famous work titled *The Rites of Passage*. Routledge. He worked in different places and that gave him the chance to notice that there are common phases but different ways of celebrating them preserving the same meaning of the occasion. Van Gennep explained it in his book *Le Folclore de Dauphine*

I demonstrated...that all over the world and in all civilizations, from the most primitive to the most evolved, every change of place, of social situation...all innovation and very often even all modifications accompanied...by rites...which always follow the same order and constitute the schema-type of the rites of passage (1932 cited in. NYE, n.d.)

## Chapter Two

---

He claimed that all rites have the same pattern of accruing. The first one is the separation from the previous phase, the second one is the movement between the phases, and the third one is the introduction to the next phase or social status. At the end, Van Gennep believed that these rites are beneficial for society, because they help people belonging to the same group release the pressures by these transitions, in other words, these movements help people to continue their lives.

Van Gennep gave scholars the inspiration to find other rites of passage such that of passing for white. Allyson Hobs defined it as follows « To pass as white was to make a decision to turn one's back on a black racial identity and to claim to belong to a group to which one was not legally assigned » (n.d.) It is simply abandoning one's previous status, identity, family and self to acknowledge one's belonging to a new one that is not yours, and build a new identity similar to the new stage.

In his turn, Frank R. Strong advanced that, "Passing is a deception that enables a person to adopt certain roles or identities from which he would be barred by prevailing social standards in the absence of his misleading conduct" (cited in. *Post Racial Realities. Passing Narratives in Contemporary U.S Fiction*. 2014) It is a cheating way that a person chooses in order to have social privileges that he is deprived from because of his current status. Passing also carried the title of white passing which is defined as followed: "A person usually of black and white parents that is recognized as only being white" (urban dictionary.)

It entails that a person is classified according to his skin colour only. For example, if anyone with dark complexion walks in the street. People would automatically assign him with the category of blacks. No attention would be given to the fact that he is mixed or

## Chapter Two

---

Mexican. Whereas a mulatto would not face any problem of classification with one race over another; his light complexion leaves no doubt of his real origins.

### 1.1. Racial Passing

Racial Passing is the ability of one person from a certain race to pass easily to another race of his choice. This was possible with mulattoes; a category of mixed race which appeared in America as a result to mixed marriages between black people and white people. Nadra Kareem Nittle also defined passing for white as « Simply put, passing occurs when members of racial, ethnic, or religious group present themselves as belonging to another such group » (n.d.)

Passing is a concept or a phenomenon that could be used as a choice or an escape from a race, social class, religion, background, mainly to achieve certain goals. The most frequent and widely spread one is passing from one race to another. Its first reason was that of mixing between races especially black and white people resulted in the birth of a category with light complexion called mulattoes that could pass for white without being noticed. These people had different names such as hybrid and half-breed. This category was considered as a threat to whites and their supposed purity.

## 2. Race

A word that was used previously to show differences among people, then it started to be used as an ideology to give power or take it from a certain group of people. A common definition for this term is: « The belief that people's qualities are influenced by their race and that the members of other races are not as good as the members of your own, or the resulting unfair treatment of members of other races » (Cambridge dictionary.) simply saying that it is the feeling of being superior to others and better than them.

## Chapter Two

---

According to Dr. Rowan Wolf race is:

Race is a socially constructed artifact that categorizes people based on visual differences which are imputed to indicate invisible differences. These categorizations are amorphous and fluid over time which reflects their social rather than physical basis. Its significance arises out of the meanings we as societies assign to it, and the way we structure race in our societies (1.)

In other words, Race is the classification of people through their physical appearances to highlight their differences “skin colour, the shape of the eye, hair texture or even the shape of the nose” which has changed over time to become as a social classification that is based on the individuals’ own thoughts of the term Race. The idea that Race has biological grounds, referring to non whites as having different genes; inferior ones, is still valid and believed in, even after this theory was disconfirmed.

According to Audery Smedly (n.d.) Race previously was not about referring to groups of people, in the English language it only meant categorizing them as kind, sort, and type. Africans were not the first ones transported to America; European people were there longer time ago. They were enslaved, after the coming of Africans, they worked, ate, slept, and even escaped with blacks, there was no trace of racism at that time, because they were all enslaved, all treated the same way. Soon after the appearance of mulattoes , whites masters noticed that blacks, whites and Mulattoes were uniting and that might cause rebellions such as the one of Bacon’s; British sent three ships to stop the rebellion of 8000 people of different races who burned Jamestown<sup>9</sup>. It was the time slave holders began

---

<sup>9</sup>In 1676, Nathaniel Bacon led a group of people against the English governor William Berekely. The two counterparts were actually cousins. Nathaniel Bacon was a new settler in Jamestown, after a period of his residency. Native Americans started attacking his property. Bacon headed to Berekely to complain but he was ignored. So, he gathered locals and convinced them to unify with him to destroy both the unfair governor and the Native Americans. He took 200 people with him and fired the Native Americans from their land. As a response, berekely sent 300 men and forced Bacon to escape to the forest. After a fierce fight the rebellion ended with the coming of the British soldiers to Jamestown. They managed to end the massacre by returning William Berekely to Britain where he died at the age of 71/2.(Spearman, 07 August 2018)



## Chapter Two

---

separating blacks from others, passing laws that gave white slaves more privileges, banning blacks from having weapons (n.d.)

Racism is a concept that one should be aware of. According to Paula Rothenberg in her work titled *Defining Racism and Sexism* and Dr. Rowan Wolf in his work *Race and Racism* defined racism as a belief that is widely spread to subordinate non whites from whites based on their race taking into account their cultural and historical Backgrounds. Social racism leads automatically to institutionalized racism that structures the power given to the race in top of classification.

Racism is one of the side effects of the detachment of Africans from their homeland and taking them to America and other Western societies then accusing them of being uncivilized, using violence against them, building stereotypes of them till today even in a post-slavery colonial era.

One can confirm that racial discrimination is still present in a post-racial U.S.A, even after the civil rights act of the 1964. Racial inequality is alive, black are suffering from unemployment, schools are more segregated than ever, black are threatened of being killed by the police force for no logical reasons. On January 26.2019 Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Anna Brown and Kiana Cox conducted a survey titled *Race in America 2019*. Results showed that race relations in America are getting worse and that black people are still confronted to racism in 2019. The fact of slavery as a history of blacks affected their current social status. 78% of blacks believe that America still has not made a step further toward equality (n.d.) The same survey showed that blacks are treated less fairly as compared to whites; 67% of blacks faced problems of employment payment. Participants mentioned that they faced situations were white people expressed racist views in front of them openly (n.d.)

### 3. Ethnicity

The United States of America is known for its complicated immigration history of people from different countries in the world, a multi-racial and multi-ethnic country. All people apart from European immigrants were considered different and inferior as compared to whites.

According to Rowan Wolf, ethnicity “reflects cultural differences, and an ethnic group is a people who share a historical and cultural heritage (and frequently have a sense of group identity)” (1.) Simply put, ethnicity means the shared cultural and historical backgrounds within a group of people which makes them different from others.

Ashley Crossman attempted to define Ethnicity as follows:

Ethnicity is a concept referring to a shared culture and a way of life. This can be reflected in language, religion, material culture such as cuisine, and culture product such as music and art. Ethnicity is often major source of social cohesion as well social conflict (n.d.)

Ethnicity therefore, is considered as a social measurement or classification of people through their languages, traditions, history and religion. It makes them belong to the same ethnic group. Ethnicity is a kind of identity, recognition of one’s own past. It is generally based on cultural elements that are acquired from society; which means that it is easy for one person to move from one ethnic category to another. For example, a person converting from Judaism to Christianity, or a child born in a mixed family, from a black father and a white mother, when being young, an African-American child automatically adopts one of his parent’s ethnicity, but when he grows up he is able to choose to which group he wants to belong. Ethnicity is the identity that makes a group of people belong to

## Chapter Two

---

each other within the same community and differ from others belonging to different communities.

People from different ethnicities according to Asheley Crossman use different ways of identification within ethnic groups. Some choose religion; others focus on a common language. Religion is important for ethnic identity; most of people rely on it to determine who belongs to what. For Americans, ethnic identity is used to give whites power and wealth and dominance over other minorities (n.d.)

According to Boundless Sociology, the complicated history of America as a multi-racial and multi-ethnic country gave the term “ethnicity” a different meaning from the common one. America was created of different minorities and the later immigrations of people from different parts of the world made it a diverse country in terms of culture, language, religion and other criteria that would redefine race relations in the United States of America. Both Race and Ethnicity overlap when it comes to America and its minorities taking the example of African-Americans that have been classified in such category due to their skin colour and how much dark a person is. The concept African-American was given to Africans as a categorization as the most appropriate and politically correct term to avoid racial injustice that America was blamed for. The term African-American became as a substitute for the word Black and Negro that were considered as insults.

Ethnicity and Race are often defined as the same concept, but one should know that they are different, still can be interrelated. According to Nadra Kareem Nittle, ethnicity for example is learnt. It is more about culture and society, while race is inherited; it deals more with the physical appearance which automatically classifies a person to a certain category unlike ethnicity that is chosen. Moreover, ethnicity can be hidden, changed or even manipulated while race cannot. Though race and ethnicity are both used interchangeably,

they do share a common feature which is their use as a way of classification; superior and inferior (n.d.)

### **4. Identity**

Identity could be considered as a word, a concept, or a way of life. Each person has his own understanding of what is the meaning of identity and how it is reflected on one's behaviours and thoughts, the way one sees the other and the way one is seen by others. According to Tatum D, to be aware of identity the question: who I Am? should be asked. For some it is easily answered while for the others it could be very difficult for them to find an appropriate answer, because they hear about it they feel like they know it but are not able to explain it, or simply have problems in terms of identity development. Identity is defined as follows:

“Identity ... is a concept that neither imprisons (as does much in sociology) nor detaches (as does much in philosophy and psychology) persons from their social and symbolic universes, [so] it has over the years retained a generic force that few concepts in our field have” (Davis, 105.)

Identity is a vital concept that changes over time with the change of the outer world. African-Americans since their arrival to America started to have problems of identity because they came carrying their African one to encounter with the American one, which would cause them clashes; confused whether to keep their previous identity and be ready for stereotypes, or to adopt the new one neglecting their own so that they would be welcomed, integrated in the white society.

According to C H Thompson identity has different types such as personal, collective, social, multiple and stigmatized. Our study is about mulattoes who have biracial identity; A mulatto is always obliged to choose between living as a black or as a white; he is never able to be both because of society, being in the middle causes him identity crisis. Hence

## Chapter Two

---

their sense of identity is higher than the others who live a stable life, a life mainly far from racism and multi-ethnicities. Different scholars from different fields have defined identity and made lists of types. Since our study is about biracial we will tend to focus on personal and social identities which are related with the psyche of a person with two races and the way he deals with the sense of duality (n.d.)

### **4.1. Personal Identity**

Personal identity is what a person understands of himself, the way he thinks and behaves, what makes him unique and different from others, one's own perception of his actual existence. Personal identity includes both internal aspects of one's life such as thoughts, beliefs and feelings. Besides, external aspects of the life of a person such as clothing, interacting with others; this could be an orientation of a person toward a complete but vital identity acquisition.

Personal Identity according to Christine Serva evolves over time depending on what we go through in our lives. For example, a biracial person as a child is not aware of the fact that he is living two lives, so he lives the way one his parents chooses with no refusal or objection. Hence, when he grows up he selects what fits him more, but this choice is not a final decision because he might choose completely the opposite after a period of time and that is related to his personal identity (n.d.)

### **4.2. Social Identity**

Social identity according to Cynthia Venney is a part of the self that emerges only when being within a group. Henry Tajfel and John Turner formulated social identity in the 1970s to show how much important it is as compared to individual one, and that it influences social relations and behaviours (n.d.)

Social identity by C H Thompson is an identity which is developed with accordance to society. In contrast to the personal one, social identity is imposed on a person living

## Chapter Two

---

within a group of people. For example, in a society, if a mulatto does not attend the weekly ceremony in the memory of all sacrifices made by previous Africans, he would be considered as a sinner. A person does not have the choice to select what he likes in an opposite society in terms of values, so a mulatto living in a black neighbourhood when passing is obliged to hide his real social identity and adopt that of whites to be accepted by them, he must behave like them.

### **4.3. Biracial Identity**

Identity development is a very important stage in the overall development of each person, it happens during childhood. As it is mentioned before, identity takes two aspects to reach its full growth; personal one which is related to the self and social one like the name entails, which is acquired from society. Biracial identity is also an important field to know about since the number of biracial individuals is constantly increasing according to the 2000 census. Before one deals with biracial identity, he should know the term biracial which means according to free dictionary, a person whose parents belong to different races.

#### **4.4.1. Biracial Identity Development**

Biracial identity develops along the life of a person, as it is known identity is dynamic, that is; a biracial is always in a constant change. Previously African-Americans biracial were claimed to have inherited disorders in terms of identity construction because there were no scientific studies giving reliable results, because the findings were built upon stereotypes and assumptions taken from white observations only with no real contact with biracial individuals themselves. However the coming of W.E.B Du Bois improved much the field and gave it more credibility by testing African-Americans themselves.

The growing number of biracial people in the United States of America and other places of the world led to the creation of models describing such kind of identity

## Chapter Two

---

development. In the 1980's, a biracial individual is likely to adopt the identity of the parent he looks like under the one drop rule that classified African-Americans as blacks even if they have one drop of black blood. Circumstances started to change after biracial African-Americans started objecting against the unfairness of such rules which led to the foundation of new models of biracial identity development like Poston's Biracial Identity Development and Continuum of Biracial Identity Model; these models aim at giving more information about the process that a mixed race person goes through.

Poston is among the first people to propose a biracial identity development, he also aided that a mixed race person would face problems of adjustment when going through this process. According to Rausaanah Hud-Aleemo, Do, and Jaqueline Countryman, Md in the first model of Poston; biracial individuals go through five stages to achieve a full identity development:

Personal identity; which appears when a person is still not aware of his mixed race, choice of group categorization; appears with the interference of some external factors such as society, parents and friends. Also, during this stage the person starts to feel the pressure of choosing one of his parent's identity, another stage is enmeshment/denial. During this stage, the individual feels guilty of choosing one race and abandoning the other, appreciation; it is when the person chooses one race grows older with the appreciation of the other race and integration; it is where a biracial even when belonging to a certain race, starts belonging and welcoming other races (41.)

The second model of identity development called Continuum of Biracial Identity Model known as COBI created by Rockquemore and Laszloffy. What is important in this model is to see how biracial people perceive themselves racially and not according to others' judgements, COBI does not classify people within one identity neglecting the other. It also shows that a person would locate any identity along the continuum because; first

## Chapter Two

---

identity is dynamic and also the person changes. He for example might choose different identities all along his life. Continuum of Biracial Identity Model also shows that biracial people when exposed to both parents' identities. They are likely to give more emphasize on one identity over the second. Biracial individuals might identify with one of their birth parent's identity without having any psychological problem. Hence, a mixed race person having singular identity is normal and "would result in high self esteem and well adjusted individual" (41.)

### **Conclusion**

While the first chapter was about the possible events that led to the appearance of Passing and how it evolved, the second chapter consisted of different concepts such as; the concept Passing in details and to show that Race and Ethnicity might be interrelated but not identical. It also aimed at clarifying Biracial Identity and its construction to help the reader know more about mixed race people and how they differ from mono racial ones.



**Chapter Three:**  
**Passing from Nella Larsen to Danzy**  
**Senna**

### Introduction

Racial Passing is a phenomenon that spread indifferent parts of the world and mostly America due to the diversity of races especially after the Loving case that allowed interracial marriages. This chapter is dedicated to analyse Passing in some literary products. *Passing* by Nella Larsen and *From Caucasia, With Love* by Danzy could be seen as reflections of passing from old times and particularly during segregation to a post racial America. *From Caucasia, With Love* is introduced to confirm that racism still exists in a multi-racial country.

### 1. Nella Larsen

Born Larsen, Nella also bore her husband's name Imes. She was considered as one of the leading figures of Harlem Renaissance and one of the authors who wrote about Passing. Larsen was born April 13, 1891. Chicago, Illinois and died at the age of 72 in New York, March 30, 1964. Her mother was Danish and her father was a mixed-race Danish West Indian who died when she was only two years old. She attended Fisk University where all the students were black. After that, she headed to Denmark where she audited classes at Copenhagen University for two years. Larsen got back to New York where she graduated from a nursing school and became a children's librarian. Her marriage to a physics professor and friendship with Carl Van Vetchen gave her social recognition (Augustyn et al, n.d.) Larsen was the first African-American woman to graduate from library school and to receive the Guggenheim Fellowship for creative writings in 1930. (Atlas, 2018)

Her first novel *Quicksand* was published in 1928 and the second one, *Passing* was published in 1929. She only had two publications in her life; she lost her fame is quick she got it after she was accused of plagiarism after she published her short story "Sanctuary."

## Chapter Three

---

Larsen disappeared after she was divorced in 1933, then she worked as a nurse in Brooklyn hospital, she was found dead in her apartment in New York after with missing of most of her belongings, but two unfinished manuscripts. She reflected the feeling of not belonging to any place in her writings since she was the only darker skinned in her family; she once said that her family felt ashamed for having her; especially her half-sister. Larsen showed readers through her characters how difficult it is to a be a container of two different race while not being able to belong to any, the rejection of others makes a mixed-race person feels not white enough to be white and not black enough to be black

### **2. *Passing* (1929)**

According to Allyson Hobbs (2016) almost 12.000 African-Americans passed for white between the late eighteenth and early twentieth century leaving behind families, friends, communities with no will for return. (4-6) many authors attempted to write about Racial Passing to show readers other alternatives an African-American chooses for the sake of having a better status. *Passing* by Nella Larsen; a novella published in 1929, was a pertinent example of the works that gave Harlem Renaissance credit and appreciation for African-American writers. Larsen dealt with racial passing or Passing as the title entails as its plot to reflect what lighter skinned African-American people were facing during segregation and to educate white people about black life, besides criticizing whiteness itself for both black and white readers (Hobbs, 29.)

*Passing* is a story of two biracial girls who happened to be childhood friends, namely Irene Redfield and Clare Kendry, who both pass for white but in different ways. Irene passes occasionally to get access to some needs, which she would not be able to get while being black such as enjoying the privilege of “restaurants, theatre tickets, and things

## Chapter Three

---

like that” (Larsen, 79), while Clare passed permanently to get full privileges that her white skin would offer.

Clare Kendry had a rough childhood, she was a daughter of a mixed couple; a black woman who died while she was young and a white father who died when she was fifteen in a bar fight. After his death, Clare was taken by her white aunts who were very religious and conservative. They treated her as a maid; like blacks are supposed to be treated at the time. Clare managed to find a white husband; John Bellow and gave birth to a white girl named Margery. Despite his hatred towards blacks, Clare was still married to him because she was afraid that her daughter would face the same troubles she has been through. John Bellow was a racist man; he once said “I don’t dislike them, I hate them” (69.) The fact that John did not know about Clare’s real background frightened her.

Clare once told Irene “I wanted tings, I knew I wasn’t bad looking and that I could pass” (Larsen, 41). She considered herself as white not accepting to return to what she was or where she once belonged. Clare Embraced whiteness and neglected blackness. Passing for Clare was the way for her to escape those conditions; the misery she lived when she was a child and the fact that both her parents died and left her with no reason to stay for.

Irene on the other hand was married to a black man; Brian Redfield; a way she chose to seek security, stability and to prove a kind of loyalty to her own race. Her husband’s occupation gave her the chance to be a middle class house wife with an honorable status in Harlem community, organizing meetings and parties. Irene cared much for her husband and sons Ted and Junior. Ted was white while Junior was colored.

After twelve years, the two old friends Clare and Irene met on the top of the Drayton Hotel and both were passing. Irene was surprised by the ability of Clare to pass with no fear, she was curious to know how was Clare passing and how did she feel when seeing

## Chapter Three

---

people of her own race. Clare had no difficulty in blending with whites because she found them more welcoming than her own people who saw her only as the janitor daughter, she also had no feeling of regret to deny her race, never felt the heaviness of duality inside of her, but things have changed since she met Irene who was attached to her race, identity, origins, she was proud of being black.

Passing in the 1920s was dangerous; racism was on its peak, there were people who passed for white and never came back (Hobbs, 4). It was what Clare planned for before her encounter with Irene which made her long for her origins, long to be with blacks, she even wanted to live in Harlem next to her friend; she told Irene “you can’t know in this pale life of mine I am all the time seeing the bright pictures of that other that I was glad to be free of” (Larsen, 8.) In a point of life; Clare imagined that she would be happier, her life would be better than the one she was living before she passes, she thought John Bellow or the fact of Racial Passing would compromise her for the suffering she has been through to discover that she always missed those days of being just black; free of any fear to be caught. Clare was tired of pretending, of that mask of whiteness so she considered Irene as her shelter; a place where she would feel both safe and happy.

Clare wanted to benefit from being white for privileges and being black to entertain herself and do what she loved the most; to be among her people. Irene who was against that whim, stated different reasons to convince Clare not to take the risk. John Bellow was the first reason; he hated blacks and never wanted to have any relation with one of them, he knew nothing about Clare’s real background because her aunts being white provided her with the right cover. Her daughter would be another reason Irene mentioned asking her to think what would happen to Margery if John discovered that she had black blood. Clare cared for nothing, she was ready to take the risk; she was not happy with John so she did

## Chapter Three

---

not care if he finds out, and about her daughter she told Irene the children are not everything.

Irene had no desire in returning Clare to her life, Brian her husband once told her that people often came back, such note made Irene wonder how do this people come back after they find all that they aimed for as white while Brian confirming her doubt by saying “they aren’t. Not satisfied.” (Larsen, 96) Clare indeed was not satisfied of being white only, so she decided to benefit from both.

Two years after the encounter, Clare made it to Irene’s house asking her help; saying that since she met Irene the first time something changed inside of her; became lonely. She saw that Irene was free and happy; something she lacked with John’s presence. The fear of being exposed accompanied Clare from the first day she chose to pass. Irene was the way in for Clare to get into Harlem again, to get the happiness she lost for the sake of social status and privileges. Clare wanted to be with people of her race, though Irene was against the decision; she felt a coming danger because she and Clare had different lives, directions and different principles. Clare has a vital liberated personality that made her noticed and interesting, unlike Irene who was conservative and serious. Eventually Irene accepted Clare and that was the beginning of a new friendship for the old friends and a new phase of both their lives.

Most of the time, Passing caused separation of people from their families, and their race. To pass meant for a person to forget his past and welcome the present and the future as a white person. On the other hand, there was the coming back from whiteness to blackness that would also cause problems and conflicts just like what happened with Irene and her Husband When Clare showed up; Irene’s relation with her husband was weak because she was standing against his dream of going to Brazil. The latter was the paradise

## Chapter Three

---

of black people; for Brian. Irene refused to let that happen thinking that staying in Harlem and being a doctor was the best choice for him and her kids.

Though Irene was proud of her origins, she acted like a white woman. The way she raised her children in a protective environment, the way she treated her own servant Zulena. Irene avoided passing not because she hated it but because she was afraid of being caught passing and humiliated, afraid of being fired from a public place (Larsen 19) though her white complexion enabled her to pass without being suspected of being black especially when she was by her own. She once said:

“It’s funny about ‘passing’. We disapprove of it and at the same time condone it. It excites our contempt and yet we rather admire it. We shy away from it with an odd kind of revulsion, but we protect it” (Larsen, 97-98.)

Simply put. A mulatto feels a kind of contradiction inside of him whether to pass or not. It is a kind of adventure to have, something exotic to take a look at the other side, feel appreciated and worthy not just some inferior creature with limited rights.

W.E.B Du Bois also wrote in his collection of essays: *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line” (cited in Louri 94.) to highlight the relation between blacks and white. He also wrote about being biracial and its effect on personality:

The double life every American Negro must live, as a Negro and as an American leads inevitably to a painful self-consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence. The result is a double life, double thoughts, double duties

## Chapter Three

---

and double social classes. And worse, double words and double ideas

(122).

It entails for the impossibility of choosing one's race or identity above the other, because both are part of one. The fact of having double perspectives, thoughts and words would cause a person psychological problems especially if the person could not be accepted by both blacks and whites because he is neither black nor white enough.

Nella Larsen was famous for having used irony in her writings. Passing meant to have a better life and full access to all privileges socially speaking, but psychologically passing was destructive in the sense that the person lives in a permanent struggle/dilemma whether to pass or stay, and if he passes; isn't he going to feel guilty of betraying his own race for the sake of belonging to a race that would reject his membership if he acknowledges his real background. The irony in the novella *Passing* is reflected through the attempt of Clare to pass for black to be safe but dies as a consequence to that. Irene also would face mental suicide after the death of the person she admired the most; Clare.

### **3. Danzy Senna**

A novelist and essayist; she was born in Boston in 1970. Her parents got married a year after interracial marriages were allowed. Belonging to diverse worlds; her mother is a poet and novelist named Fanny Howe, coming from an English/Irish family roots that goes back to the Mayflower. Her father called Carl Senna; an African-American academic and editor and a scholar-author of *The Black Press* and the struggle for Civil Rights and the *Fallacy of I.Q.* (AALBC, n.d.) He was poor during his childhood. Senna wrote a memoir in 2009 in which she tackled her father's family and her own upbringing describing how she felt after her parents' marriage break-down. Senna commented on the way she was raised "mixed" wasn't an option; you were either black or white" (Riley, n.d.)



## Chapter Three

---

According to AALBC (1997-2019) Senna earned her B.A. from Stanford University, MFA for creative writings from the University of California and other several awards. Her first novel *Caucasia* was translated into ten languages and has won several awards such as the American Library Associations' Alex award and was named a Los Angeles Times best book of the year (n.d.)

Danzy Senna frequently writes about, gender, identity, motherhood and race. In all her writings; Senna attempts to reflect her childhood, the fact of being mixed-raced. She did not face many troubles since she was brought in an environment that taught her to be proud of her blackness. She learned how to live carrying two races, two heritages and two Identities, though she once said that people had no choice, they either be white or black never both.

### **4. *From Caucasia, With Love* (1998)**

Racial passing was widely used as a plot in literature especially during the Harlem renaissance since this movement aimed at reflecting what blacks in general and mulattoes have been witnessing. In her turn, Danzy Senna also made a contribution and wrote about “passing” in a post racial America that was marked by permitting interracial marriages.

*From Caucasia, with love* is a story that took place in Boston, America around the 1970s and the 1980s. It is about two biracial girls of a white woman named Sandy Lodge; a teacher of dyslexic children and an activist and a black father called Deck Lee who was obsessed by theories of Race and their effect on people. Deck is an associate professor at university and an academic revolutionary. The narrative centers mainly on Birdie; one of the daughters of Deck and Sandy who happened to be white enough to be considered as Caucasian. While her sister Cole who appeared to be black fit in Nkrumah school they are going to attend in later events.

## Chapter Three

---

Deck and Sandy's fighting was a way Senna showed the impossibility of the two races to get along even after having children. The differences are too apparent to be ignored. Sandy was an activist, she used to host radicals in her house and Deck was against the idea. Sandy believed in actions rather than speaking theories, she thought that this is a way to fight racism at that time because she wanted her kids to have a better life. She even did not let them join school because she was scared that they would confront racism in a way or another. Birdie believed that the actual reason of her parents' constant fight because of her, because of the fact of her being white. She thought that they did not like her. The fact of having two daughters with different complexion was challenging in New York at that time especially because of racial wars.

Birdie Lee or Baby Lee, according to her certificate, is the younger daughter of Deck and Sandy who would be passing not in terms of skin colour only but also ethnically and linguistically to protect her mother and herself from an unknown danger. Passing does not necessarily mean a black white person going for white. It could be also the contrary and that what Birdie would discover when she starts identifying and de-identifying with the most convenient for the moment; to be black or white.

To protect her own daughters from racism and harassment, Sandy decided to teach them by herself thinking that that was the right thing to do due to the racial wars in Boston at that time between Irish and blacks. After a period of time, it was no longer possible to keep them home especially because of the extensive use of "Eleno" a language they created by their own. They joined Nkrumah school since they were not able to attend other schools because of segregation.

Both Cole and Birdie had been color blind; they had no idea about racism before they went to school and mix up with other black children. Collette having a darker skin

## Chapter Three

---

colour did not face difficulties with her mates because no one could know she was mixed. However, Birdie had problems from the first day. One of her mates threw a spin ball on her and another tried to cut her hair. It was hard for Birdie to deal with such rejection from others, she felt lonely all the time, and she even had sleeping problems. Cole started having a new direction in her life; she gained new friends besides the physical and emotional changes she was witnessing. Growing adolescent kept her away from her younger sister. Cole was no more playing with Birdie or caring much of her because she had other priorities.

Birdie gained new friends and started her own new direction as well though always seeking Cole and her father's attention. It was the first time when she started passing as a black in Nkrumah school by wearing earrings, putting makeup and even changing her accent to fit mates' behaviour. It was a cultural passing she chose unconsciously in order to be accepted.

Birdie's father and mother were already separated and that affected her a lot. Though their fights disturbed her previously, she missed them when she felt lonely. Her mother busy with radicals, her sister busy with her new life and her father with his new girlfriend named Carmen, the latter liked Cole more but disliked Birdie because she resembled her mother; a reminder of the blue blood running in her veins which Carmen hated and avoided. Carmen used to treat Birdie badly when her father was not around and ignored her while he was giving all the attention to Cole, she sometimes noticed Carmen looking to her in a clear disgust. Birdie once said that people used to be amused or surprised when they saw her and her sister, used to make her feel the differences but Carmen confirmed that those differences were important, confirmed that the difference between Cole and her were deeper than skin colour.

## Chapter Three

---

Before the coming of Carmen, Deck used to take both his kids to Roxbury where he lived after his separation with Sandy. Birdie felt ignored also by her father and that distracted her. There were times when she refused to accompany them because she felt like she did not exist with her sister's presence. Deck used to watch News with Cole explaining for her what was taking place outside, reading out loud for her and listening to the radio with her and telling her theories about race with no attention to Birdie who was either sleeping in the other room watching them from a distance hoping to be with them or eating her hair as a sign of distraction. She found a way to gain their attention by making fun of herself most of the time but that was not enough. On the contrary, Birdie felt fine with her mother who did not make her feel the tension of race and skin colour. Birdie felt a kind of safety with her mother and compensated the love she lacked with her own father. Unlike Cole who did not like the fact of having a white mother, Birdie thought that sandy was not able to raise a black daughter. Colette thought that to be black enough you need to have a black mother who knows how to do your hair and that is the reason why she favoured Carmen over her own mother. She would later find out that she was wrong.

The point that marked a transitional stage of Birdie's life was when she left with her mother away from Boston escaping from the FBI because of an unknown danger. Sandy and Deck took the one who resembled them the most in order not to be exposed. It was the longest period of passing Birdie has been through. She passed for the sake of her mother and her own. Birdie was the key for successful disappearance. They had to change their names, Birdie to Jess and Sandy to Sheila; a widow of a deceased professor. Passing meant to forget about one's past and claim a new identity and a new lifestyle to deceive whites and make them believe that the passer is one of them. After several years of moving, Sandy decided to settle down, she was tired of the constant movement and fear to be caught. Sandy chose a small town called New Hampshire. It was the shelter Sandy

## Chapter Three

---

chose after four years of escape to settle and finally rest from the danger she was confronted to.

Birdie always had the feeling of something missing inside her as long as they were moving with fake identities, backgrounds and the fact that Birdie was not passing only to white but as Jewish as well made her feel constantly uncomfortable. Birdie was only waiting for her father's return and mostly for Cole. She thought that having them back was the only thing that would complete her. Though she was physically able to pass but she never wanted to be part of whites, she was loyal to her blackness and resisted outer circumstances to prove to her father she deserved to be black. After four years of passing she kept trying to remember them with all possible details. She even used to fantasize of being a spy, reporting what white used to think and say about blacks.

Passing was a heavy burden that Birdie carried with her all the time. The feeling of being scared and unsafe always accompanied her especially after her mother met Jim, a man she started dating. Birdie disliked him because she thought he was a Fed. She also hated the idea that her mother was not waiting for Deck and Cole. She has been always resistant to him, always avoided him because of the fear of liking him over her father. Though he helped her in her classes, she never gave him the chance to get closer or play the role of the father with her.

Birdie joined school, gained new friends and the feeling of insecurity started to vanish, she actually liked being white. Birdie was growing up, changing and that fact made her almost forget her past, her father's features but not Cole.

Before arriving to Hampshire, Birdie and her mother once lived in a commune of women called Aurora, she had a friend there named Alexis. It was the only time since she left Boston where she felt fine to be unknown; nameless because all residents there were

## Chapter Three

---

like her, hiding or escaping things. She did not feel heavy carrying secrets since everyone else did the exact same thing. When they moved to New Hampshire, things became worse. She was obliged to be careful again, always protective and ready to recall the story her mother made up as a cover to guarantee their safety. She did not feel belonging even though she had friends such as Nicholas and Maria. Birdie was always pretending to be someone she was not hiding the real her for the moment when she meets Cole and her father, the moment when she could openly say: Am Black

People in New Hampshire were racist. Birdie could clearly hear those whites throwing bad words and insults on blacks. It was obvious through their treatment to Samantha; the only black girl at school. Bird used to compromise herself by saying “I was a spy in an enemy territory” (Senna, 296.) The way they treated Samantha made Birdie more resistant to Jim, to the white world by remembering her origins, past, family and resistance to her mother’s new way of life. She kept reminding her of their real aim, to wait for their family but she did not know that no one was coming for them, that her parents’ separation was for good.

The ability of Birdie made her more confused from the inside. She never felt white because of her black origins and never felt black because her features were saying she is white. She was in a state of neither being black enough to feel safe nor white enough to pass peacefully as Caucasian.

Birdie felt betrayed by the only one she trusted. She felt like her mother is no longer the one she wants to stay with. When she went on a search for something against Jim in her mother’s closet, she found a postcard from Carmen her father’s sister which made her dislike the fact that her mother revealed all that they were hiding to Jim. It was the day when she felt that Cole is the only person she liked the most. Cole was the one she was

## Chapter Three

---

fighting for. After that Birdie left home with her box of Negrobelia; a box her father and Cole gave her before they leave to Brazil. She took an amount of money and took a bus to Boston; their home town, searching for Carmen. She finally found Carmen; it was comfortable to be with her. Birdie imagined herself as the daughter of Carmen living peacefully as a black without all those contradictions of skin colour.

At the end of the story Birdie finds her father and blames him for not having done efforts to find her. She told him that she has been passing as a white Jewish girl to make him angry, but he just said that there was no such thing called passing and that race was only an illusion that whites invented and blacks believed in. Nevertheless, she did not believe him and asked him why he chose to take Cole instead of her if race does not exist as he said.

Deck showed her a book he wrote about race as a justification for his absence. Deck had a theory about mulattoes. He compared them to poisoned air. Birdie and Cole were the first canaries to survive though injured by the poison of race relations. His daughter believed none of it and only looked for her sister Cole. Cole and Birdie finally met after a long suffering though Birdie missed her mother; it as the longest period they have been apart. It was the completion Birdie was searching since the first day she passed. Cole was the one she loved the most; the one whom she saw herself through. Birdie once said about Cole “that face was me and I was that face” (Senna, 5.)

### **5. Passing from Nella Larsen to Danzy Senna**

The great migration (1916-1970) was the reason why people chose to pass for white. African-Americans headed to the North for a better life. But after their arrival, both housing and working places were segregated. Black whites at that time found out that their skin would offer them better opportunities in the North, better social privileges they lacked

## Chapter Three

---

if they remained within blacks (Hobbs, 26.) Hobbs advanced, “Passing...has ceased to be the social issue that it was in the nineteenth and early twentieth century” (10.)

In his book, Hobbs discussed the idea of passing as an exile sometimes chosen other times not. The chosen exile is reflected through the novella *Passing* written by Nella Larsen. While the other idea of not choosing the exile is reflected through the novel *From Caucasia, With Love* written by Danzy Senna. This section is dedicated to shed light on the difference of passing between the two texts of literature.

According to the same scholar, there are three types of passers. The ones who choose to pass escaping black identity and never come back. Others pass due to some problems, while others chose to pass occasionally. Clare, one of Larsen’s protagonists, fit the first type because she was escaping the rejection of her own people. The second type is similar to the way Birdie was passing since she passed running from federals. The third and last type reflects Irene’s way of passing, for she passed for social privileges.

On the one hand, characters In *Passing*, Clare and Irene chose to pass; Clare for white while Irene passed for black. Hence, some people disappear in the white world not necessarily because they admire white people, but to escape blackness and that what Clare Kendry did. She passed for white with no intention to come back because it was difficult for her especially with her white skin to be accepted among her own people. She hated the way they treated her. She said to Irene that she was more welcomed by whites who did not suspect her to be black. Though her husband was racist, she felt fine as long as he does not find out. They passed deceiving whites to get access to all social benefits like Clare once said: “I wanted things” (Larsen, 41.) Clare did succeed in getting all she wanted. Irene also was living a good life by choosing to pass for a black. She was married to a doctor and had two kids. She also was a recognisable member of the town community and she lived



## Chapter Three

---

comfortably. She passed for white from time to time. At that time, segregation was still applied in the North so there was a necessity to claim white identity to get what she wanted.

On the other hand, Birdie the main character of the novel *From Caucasia, with love* was obliged to pass as white for her mother's and her safety. She did not choose the exile, she found herself in. Her disapproval was reflected through her words:

Long time ago I disappeared. One day I was here. The next I was gone. It happened as quickly as all that. One day I was playing schoolgirl games with my sister....The next I was a nobody, just a body without a name or history, sitting beside my mother in the front seat of our car, moving forward on the highway, not stopping. (And when I stopped being nobody, I would become white —white as my skin, hair, bones allowed (Senna, 1.)

Birdie was not aware of the meaning of passing; she called it disappearance. She found herself white on the sudden, taken by her mother in the midst of the night without any explanation. Sandy ordered her to collect what she could and go. They left everything behind, their relatives, home, memories and everything that would say she was actually black.

The events of *Passing* show that both Clare and Irene passed for their own benefits. It was a part of selfishness. They did not think of others' reactions. Clare passed for privileges and status and got married to a rich white man to enjoy his wealth using her skin colour to deceive him and all whites around her. Irene too passed for black for security and to have a safe life that she thought was best for her and her husband and both kids Ted and Junior.

## Chapter Three

---

The loyalty to one's race could be considered as another difference. Clare shows no loyalty to blackness. She once declared to Irene that she hated blacks and that was the reason why she passed as white. Blackness was a heavy burden that she got rid of. A burden she was scared to death that Margery her daughter would inherit. Clare showed no guilt leaving behind her origins. On the contrary, she embraced whiteness with all chances it provided.

Irene showed a kind of loyalty to her black heritage even though it was not apparent. To convince herself that she is black, she got married to a black man, lived in Harlem; brought two mixed children and joined the town's important women with parties she used to organize. But when going deeper in the story, one would notice that she was not loyal to her blackness. She did not choose to live in a black neighbourhood because she loved it, but because it was safe for her. The way she treated Zulena, her black maid, was evidence of the feeling of superiority her skin offered, the way she raised her kids. These are all reasons that might confirm that whiteness controlled the way she lived. Irene could be considered as a model of a white woman.

Birdie, Senna's protagonist, showed a complete different reaction toward her blackness. Though she passed as a white Jewish for several years, she never forgot her origins and even when she did; it would not take her much time before she remembered. Birdie used to play a game in an attempt to remember her father, sister, and home. She was more attached to her family and origins; Aunt Carmen, her father and Cole. She always felt stranger with whites around her. Not able to fit, always thinking of her blackness and the contradiction she felt crossing the Color Line physically but not able spiritually. She was in a constant search for completion; completion that she would only feel with her sister because she was a reflection of her own even though they did not share

## Chapter Three

---

the same complexion. Birdie finally broke up from the white world and went to the only person she ever loved and felt safe with; Cole.

People passed all the time for different reasons. The 1920's marked an increasing number of people passing for white due to several reasons such as the Great migration, Jim Crow Laws, and the failure of Reconstruction. According to Hobbs, Passing got to its end around the 1950's which marked a change in African-Americans' status. They were finally given citizenship. Black people were given recognition. Danzy Senna published the novel *From Caucasia, With Love* in 1998 with a setting anchored in the 1970's which came to prove that Racial Passing still exists even after blacks were no more considered inferior, no more segregated from whites. Senna aimed at showing that racism still exists in the United States of America. She wanted to show that after the long struggle for equality and recognition. African-Americans are still passing to avoid the unfairness of whites and their endless desire to preserve their pure blood.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the fact that America is considered as the largest multi racial country in the world, African-Americans are still confronted to racism and unfairness as compared to other minorities. Hence, *Passing* by Nella Larsen and *From Caucasia, With Love* by Danzy Senna are literary products that confirm how passing was and is still regarded in America. It mainly intends to show that racism still exists through Senna's novel.



# **General Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

African-Americans used different ways to avoid racism. However, mulattoes with their invisible blackness were the ones who succeeded to pass for whites seeking equality and privileges that they could not obtain had they preserved their original identities as blacks.

This research paper aimed at shedding light on the phenomenon “Racial Passing” and the category of mulattoes through the chosen novels *Passing* by Nella Larsen and *From Caucasia, With Love* by Danzy Senna which belonged to different periods of times to show how people pass and the reason behind their act.

It was hypothesized that racial passing still exists in the United States of America even after the integration and desegregation of blacks within whites. *From Caucasia, With Love*, a novel published in 1998 has confirmed that. Despite the endless racial wars African-American have been through, racism still exists. Consequently, racial passing still exists.

## **Works Cited**

## Works Cited

### Books

Hobbs. Allyson, *A Chosen Exile*. Harvard University Press, 2016

James, Davis F. *Who is Black ? One Nation's Definition*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010.

Larsen, Nella. *Passing*, New York. London, 1929.

Senna. Danzy, *From Caucasia, With Love*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2001

### Web Sites

" *Transatlantic Slave Trade*." UNESCO. 2017, [unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/slave-route/transatlantic-slave-trade](https://unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/slave-route/transatlantic-slave-trade).

Pariona, Amber. "What Is The Difference Between Race And Ethnicity?" worldatlas. 25 04 2017, [worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-the-difference-between-race-and-ethnicity.html](https://worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-the-difference-between-race-and-ethnicity.html)

Boddy- Evans, Alistair. "*The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*." ThoughtCo, Oct. 22,2018, [thoughtco.com/the-trans-atlantic-slave-trade-44544](https://thoughtco.com/the-trans-atlantic-slave-trade-44544).

Angela, Onwachi-willig. "Race and Racial Identity Are Social Contrusts." The New York Times. 06 09 2016, [nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/06/16/how-fluid-is-racial-identity/race-and-racial-identity-are-social-constructs](https://nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/06/16/how-fluid-is-racial-identity/race-and-racial-identity-are-social-constructs).

Arnold K. Ho et al. "*How Are Black-White Biracial People Perceived In Terms of Race ?*" Killogg-Insight. 06 12 2017, [google.com/amp/s/insight.kellogg.northwest.edu/article/how-are-black-white-biracial-people-are-percieved-in-terms-of-race/amp](https://google.com/amp/s/insight.kellogg.northwest.edu/article/how-are-black-white-biracial-people-are-percieved-in-terms-of-race/amp).



Crossman. Ashley, "Ethnicity Definition in Sociology." ThoughtCo, May. 25, 2019, [thoughtco.com/ethnicity-definition-3026311](https://www.thoughtco.com/ethnicity-definition-3026311).

Arnold Van Gennep. accessed on 22 03 2019, [newworldencyclopedia.org»entryArnoldVangenep-newworldencyclopedia](https://newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Arnold_Van_Gennep).

Augustyn, Adam. et al. " *Slave Trade*." Britannica. 05 10 2018, [britannica.com/topics/slave-trade](https://www.britannica.com/topics/slave-trade).

Barbara C, Cruz and Michael J, Berson. "The American Melting Pot? Miscegenation Laws in the United States." OAH Magazine of History, Vol. 15, no. (Summer, 2001), pp. 80-84.

"*Brief Biography of Nella Larsen*." Litchart. 2019, [litcharts.com/lit/passing](https://litcharts.com/lit/passing).

Burt. JM, Halpin. G. *African American Identity Development: A Review of the Literature. Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association*. New Orleans, LA: Auburn University, 1996.

Christensen. Stephany, "*The Great Migration (1915-1960)*." BLACK PAST. 06. 12. 2007, [blackpast.org/african-american-history/grat-migration-1915-1960/](https://blackpast.org/african-american-history/grat-migration-1915-1960/)

CH, Thomson. "*different types of identity*." Sociology Twinham. 2012, [google.com/amp/s/sociologytwinham.com/2012/06/25/different-types-of-identity/amp](https://www.google.com/amp/s/sociologytwinham.com/2012/06/25/different-types-of-identity/amp).

David. White, "separate but equal." Study.com. [study.com/academy/lesson/separate-but-equal-definition-doctrine-law.html](https://www.study.com/academy/lesson/separate-but-equal-definition-doctrine-law.html).

EMMER Pieter, "*The Atlantic Slave Trade* ", Encyclopedie pour une histoire nouvelle de l'Europe [on line], 2016, published 14/05/2018, Permalink : <https://ehne.fr/en/mode/998>

"Examples of Jim Crow Laws." YourDictionary, n.d. Web. 03 04 2019, [examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-jim-crow-laws.html](https://www.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-jim-crow-laws.html)

GAVIN J, REDDICK. "Miscegenation Laws." Civil Liberties in the United States. 05.08.2012, [uscivil liberties.org/historical-overview/4158-miscegenation-laws.html](https://uscivil liberties.org/historical-overview/4158-miscegenation-laws.html).

Louri, Glenn C." *The "Color Line" Today.*" The Public Intrest. 2019,  
nationalaffaires.com/public\_intrest/detail/the-color-line-today.

Hakim, Adi. "*Africa and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.*" BBC. 05 10 2012,  
bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/africa\_article\_01.shtml.

Head, Tom. "*Interracial Marriage Laws History & Timeline.*" ThoughtCo. Oct. 16, 2018,  
thoughtco.com/interracial-marriage-laws-721611.

Gates, Henry Louis,JR.. "*The African American- Migration Story.*" PBS. 2013,  
pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/on-african-american-migrations/

Wilkerson, Isabel. "*The Long-Lasting Lagacy of the Great Migration.*" Smithsonian.com.  
September 2016, smithsonianmag.com/history/long-lasting-lagacy-great-migration-180960118/

"*Is Danzy Senna Black?*" AALBC.com,=. 1997-2019,  
aalbc.com/authors.php?author\_name=Danzy+Senna.

Jeff, Wallenfeldt. "*Thirteenth Amendment.*" Britannica.12 12 2016,  
britannica.com/topic/Thirteenth-Amendment.

Kelly Jean. Kelly. "Mixed Marriages." July 08. 2018, edited by George Grow

Kozyarakis, Yulia. *Post Racial Realities. Passinng Narratives in Contemporary U.S Fiction.* 2014.  
Freien Universität Berlin, Phd dissertation.

Lay, Kenneth James. "Sexual Racism: A Legacy of Slavery." National Black Law Journal, 1993,  
13(03,) escholarship.org/uc/item/3qd7s83r. reconstructionerajimcrowlaws.weebly.com/listof-jil-  
ctow-law.html.

Lewis. Femi, "The Jim Crow Era." ThoughtCo, Sep. 08, 2018, thoughtco.com/what-is-jim-crow-  
45387.

"List of the United States Jim Crow Laws (1876-1965)", accessed 06 04 2019,  
<https://reconstructionerajimcrowlaws.weebly.com/list-of-jim-crow-laws.html>

Little. Becky, "who Was Jim Crow?" NATINAL GEOGRAPHIC. 06 07 2015,  
google.com/amp/s/relay.nationatgeographic.com/proxy/distribution/public/amp/2015/08/150806-  
voting-rights-act-anniversary-jim-crow-segregation-discriminatin-racism-historyy.

Luxenberg, Steve. "*The Forgotten Northern Origines of Jim Crow.*" time.com 12 02 2019,  
google.com/amp/s/time.com/5527029/jim-crow-plessy-history/%3famp=true

Nolen. Jeanette. L "Slave Trade." Britannica. 05 10 2018, britannica.com/topic/slave-trade.

Mahogany L. Swanson, *So What Are You Anyway?* American Psychological Association. August  
2013, apa.org/pi/families/resources/newsletter/2013/08/biracial-identity.

Ray. Michael, "*Executive Order 9981.*" 26 09 2013. Britanica. britannica.com/topic/executive-  
Order-9981.

"Miscegenation Laws in the United States." teenVOGUE. November 29, 2017,  
google.com/amp/s/www.teenvogue.com/story/miscegenation-laws-in-the-united-states-  
explained/amp.

Nava. Atlas, "*Nella Larsen.*" Literary Ladies Guide. 15 03 2018, literaryladiesguide.com/author-  
biography/larsen-nella/

Mcnamara. Robert, "The Story of Nat Turner's Rebellion." ThoughtCo, Dec.6, 2018,  
thoughtco.com/nat-turners-rebellion-4058944.

Nittle, Nadra Kareem. "*What Is the Definition of Passing for White?*" ThoughtCo, Jun.1,2019,  
thoughtco.com/ what. is. passing. for. white. 2834967

Nittle, Nadra Kareem. "*Difficulties Faced by Interracial Couples Historically and Today.*"  
ThoughtCo, Jun. 1, 2019, thoughtco.com/common-problems-interracial-couples-have-faced-  
2834748.

Norbeck. Eduard, Alexander, Boddy C. «Rites of Passage .». Britannica. 11 06 2018, britannica.com/topic/rite-f-passage.

Passing, <https://www.yourdictionary.com/passing>, accessed on 19/03/2019

Raushanah. Hud-Aleem et al. "*Biracial Identity Development and Recommendations in Therapy.*" *From the Department of Psychiatry*, Boonshoft School of Medicine, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio, November.2008

Rabkin, Michele. "Mixed Race Literature." *The Book Worm*, Pact's Point of View, 2010

"Race and Ethnicity in the US." *Boundless Sociology*.courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-sociology/chapter/race/

Hellie. Richard, "Slavery" Britannica. 22 01 2019, britannica.com/topic/slavery-sociology.

Rivas. Jorge, "May 17,1954: Supreme Court Rules Racial Segregation in Schools Unconstitutional." 17 05 2013, colorlines.com/articles/may-17-1945-supreme-court-rules-racial-segregation-schools-unconstitutional.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.pcc.edu/illumination/wp-content/uploads/sites2018/05/race-and-racism-curriculum.

Rowan, Wolf. "*Race and Racism.*" Portland Community College, Oregon.

*Separate but equal policy to 1939.* Bitesize, bbc.com/bitesize/guides/z8srd2p/revision/4.

Serva. Christine, "*what is personal identity?- definition, philosophy & development.*" Study.com, 14 May 2015, study.com/academylesson/what-ispersonal-identity-definition-philosophy-development.

Shmoop Edittorial Team. "*Jim Crow Timeline of Important Dates.*"shmoop. Shmoop University, Inc., 11 Nov. 2008. Web. 06 April. 2019.

Smedly, Audery. "RACE-The Power of an Illusion." 2003. PBS. accessed on 26 03 2019 <  
[www.Pbs.org/race/000\\_About/002\\_4-background-02-06.htm](http://www.Pbs.org/race/000_About/002_4-background-02-06.htm)>.

Riley, Steven F. "Danzy Senna, *Caucasia: A Novel*." MIXED RACE STUDIES. 1997-2019,  
[mixedracesstudies.org/?tag=danzy-senna](http://mixedracesstudies.org/?tag=danzy-senna)

Sola, Rey. "When was the first time you learned about the one drop rule ?" Solarey.net. 2016.  
[google.com/amp/solarey.net/origin-meaning-one-drop-rule/amp](http://google.com/amp/solarey.net/origin-meaning-one-drop-rule/amp).

Sinha, Surabhi. *Great Migration*, Britannica. 17 12 2014, [britannica.com/event/grat-migration](http://britannica.com/event/grat-migration).

Taig, Spearman. "NBC News THINK." 07 07 218. Bacon's Rebellion: The First Rebellion Against  
English Rule...In 1676. 18 06 2019, [althatsinteresting.com/bacons-rebellion](http://althatsinteresting.com/bacons-rebellion).

Tatum, D. "The Complexity of Identity: "Who am I?" Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together  
in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race." New York: Basis Books,  
2003:18–28.book

Teasley, Deborah. " *Interracial Marriage : Definition History & Laws*."  
[Study.com/academy/lasson/interracial-marriage-definition-history-laws.html](http://Study.com/academy/lasson/interracial-marriage-definition-history-laws.html).

*The triangular slave trade*, BBC History, [bbc.com/bitesize/guides/zy7fr82/revision/1](http://bbc.com/bitesize/guides/zy7fr82/revision/1).

Lewis, Thomas. " *Transatlantic Slave Trade*." Britannica. 09 Augst 2015,  
[britannica.com/topic/transatlantic-slave-trade](http://britannica.com/topic/transatlantic-slave-trade).

THORPE, JR. "50 Years Ago Today, Loving V. Virginia Made Interracial Marriage Legal in the  
U.S. Here's How They Got There ." Bustle. 12 06 2007, [bustle.com/p/50-years-ago-today-loving-v-  
virginia-made-interracial-marriage-legal-in-the-us-heres-how-they-got-there-63762](http://bustle.com/p/50-years-ago-today-loving-v-virginia-made-interracial-marriage-legal-in-the-us-heres-how-they-got-there-63762).

VINAS-NELSON, JESSICA. " *Interracial Marriage in Post-Racial America*." ORIGINS, OSU.  
EDO, vol. 10, issue 12, semptember 2017, [origins.osu.edu/article/interracial-marriage-post-racial-  
america](http://origins.osu.edu/article/interracial-marriage-post-racial-america).

Vinney, Cynthia. "*Understanding Social Identity Theory and its Impact on Behavior.*" ThoughtCo, May. 25, 2019, [thoughtco.com/social-identity-theory-4174315](https://www.thoughtco.com/social-identity-theory-4174315)

Wieland, Carl. "Slavery and 'one drop of blood,'" *Creation.com*, vol. 33, issue 3, July 2011, [crrreation.com/slavery-one-drop-of-blood](https://www.creation.com/slavery-one-drop-of-blood).

Whittlestone, Jess. "how useful is identity." jess whittle stone. 19 04 2014. accessed 02 04 2019. [jesswhittlestone.com/blog/2014/4/19/how-useful-is-identity.html](https://www.jesswhittlestone.com/blog/2014/4/19/how-useful-is-identity.html).