



## Racial Discrimination in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the “Black Lives Matter” Movement

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**Abstract:** *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the "Black Lives Matter" movement are two different themes, but both are related to racial discrimination. For the novel, it depicts the story of a slave named Tom, and describes the pain and inequality brought about by the slavery through the experience of Tom and other characters. This novel caused great repercussions around the American Civil War, helped to promote the struggle against the slavery, and became one of the classics of world literature. While the "Black Lives Matter" movement advocates for equality, justice, and the elimination of violence and discrimination against the black people. The focus of this movement is to protest against violent or arbitrary actions against African Americans, such as illegal arrests, excessive use of force, or intentional killings. Although these two themes emerged in different historical and cultural periods, they share a common goal of opposing racial discrimination and pursuing equality and justice. Moreover, in the current era, the "Black Lives Matter" movement is more diverse and inclusive compared to past movements. By publishing anti-racial discrimination information on media and social media, and organizing, more people are involved in the fight against discrimination. They are all aimed at opposing and eliminating racial discrimination, and promoting the construction of a more equal, diverse, and just society. Due to different historical backgrounds and cultural characteristics, there are certainly differences in practice and ideology. This article explores the connection between the "Black Lives Matter" movement and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which both reflect the long-standing issues of racial discrimination and social injustice in American society. As a chronic disease of American society, although racial discrimination and social inequality are difficult to solve, it is necessary for us to conduct some detailed analysis on them. The connection between the novel and the movement indicates that the ongoing struggle for equality and justice is meaningful, that is, the liberation of black people can only be achieved through their own struggles.

**Keywords:** *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, racial discrimination, "Black Lives Matter", social equality

### Introduction

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a novel that exposes the cruel reality of slavery in the southern United States. The book depicts the fate and experience of enslaved black Tom, reflecting the exploitation and oppression of black slaves under the slavery system, as well as racial and class conflicts. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as a literary work, can be reinterpreted as a manifestation of nonviolence, anti-discrimination, love, and faith. The publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* profoundly revealed the suffering of the blacks under slavery. This novel became one of the important materials in the anti-slavery movement, and accelerated the process of abolishing slavery in the southern states of the United States. The "Black Lives Matter" movement refers to a series of social movements carried out by black Americans to fight for equal rights and social justice. This movement can be traced back to the 1960s, when black people in the southern United States suffered from severe racial discrimination and oppression. They fought for equal rights and social justice through nonviolent protests and demonstrations. Both the "Black Lives Matter" movement and the resistance to systemic racism and social injustice in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* aim to bring change and a better future to African Americans. Similarly, the "Black Lives Matter" movement also advocates for anti-discrimination, using mass media to convey information and messages to reveal unfair and unjust behavior towards black people. The publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* aroused anger and condemnation in the white society, but also promoted the American public's understanding and reflection on slavery. The "Black Lives Matter" movement has also caused strong reactions in different fields of society, from representatives of racism to the growing number of people today, all of which have triggered social reactions and changes in forms in different ways.

Therefore, both the novel and movement have imposed a profound impact on American society at different times through cultural symbols, historical reflection, and social change.

### Literature Review

From the perspective of the protagonist Uncle Tom, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* reflects the difficult life of black slaves under slavery and reveals the seriousness of racial discrimination<sup>[1]</sup>. The novel was published in 1852 and had a significant impact on American society at that time, known as strong evidence of the anti-slavery movement. With the passage of

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time, the perspective and role of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* have gradually evolved and deepened. Nowadays, due to the rise of movements such as "Black Lives Matter" movement, people's attention to the issue of racial discrimination continues to increase. The following will explore literature reviews on these two aspects:

**About the Racial Discrimination in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.** This literature mainly reviews academic research literature from the 1900-1990s and various critics' criticisms of racial discrimination in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, revealing some controversies: on the one hand, the novel has become an important literature in the United States against slavery and racial discrimination; On the other hand, there are also some controversies that suggest that the descriptions of the writer still carry the view of racial discrimination. In this article, *Between Reception and Production: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Jubilee Singers in Britain and America*, Baker, H. comprehensively elaborates on the different views of various parties on the book<sup>[2]</sup>. The author explores the possibility of dialogue and writing about racial discrimination in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by examining the different evaluations of Uncle Tom among British and American audiences. He believes that although there is a certain racial bias in Stowe people's writing, her words reveal the equal rights and dignity of black people.

**About the "Black Lives Matter" movement.** The "Black Lives Matter" movement refers to a social movement launched in the United States to oppose racial discrimination and police violence, aimed at calling for social justice, equality, and human rights. Many scholars have carried out research on it. In this article, *The Black Lives Matter Movement: What History Can Teach Us About A New Call For Civil Rights*, Patterson, O. explores the origin and development of the "Black Lives Matter" movement<sup>[3]</sup>, while analyzing its response to the issue of racial discrimination in contemporary American society, and playing a positive role in raising the voice of black people and rallying broader anti racial discrimination forces. The article proposes that addressing racial issues in the United States are not just a matter of law and policy and people should pay more attention to the conflicts between different social classes and avoid repeating historical mistakes. Crenshaw, K. W. explores the different social issues that intersect in the "Black Lives Matter" movement, such as race, gender, class, and how these issues interact with each other. The author emphasizes the importance of a staggered framework, which comprehensively considers different forms of discrimination in order to achieve true equality<sup>[4]</sup>. Jones, J. M. explores how the "Black Lives Matter" movement challenges traditional political theories of freedom and equality by emphasizing the connection between black people's vulnerability and political rights. The author believes that this challenge helps to raise awareness of social inequality and promote fair and inclusive political practices<sup>[5]</sup>.

As important cultural phenomena in the history of human society, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and "Black Lives Matter" movement have a profound impact on such issues as slavery, racial discrimination, and social equality, civil rights and so on. Studying the two is of great significance, for the one hand, studying the historical background of the novel and the movement can help us better understand the cultural, economic, and social environment at that time, and thus better understand the issues involved in the two themes; for the other hand, both the novel and the movement have made positive contributions to promoting social, cultural, and other changes in the United States, so it is necessary to study the underlying dynamics of these changes.

In summary, by studying the novel and the movement, we can better understand the relevant social, cultural, and other issues in American history, and promote the common progress and development of human society

### **An Analysis of Racial Discrimination in *Uncle Tom's Cabin***

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a novel set in the slavery of the southern United States, which depicts extreme racial discrimination between slave owners and black slaves at that time. In the novel, black slaves are regarded as property and subjected to inhumane treatment and exploitation, while slave owners resort to cruel violence and harsh punishment against them. Through this description, the novel vividly displays the racial discrimination caused by the slavery system in the southern United States at that time, and also calls for people to oppose this unfair and unethical system. Through this novel, readers can see the cruelty and injustice of slavery, and call on people to take positive action to abolish it. She resonated widely through the real scenes and vivid character portrayals described in the novel. The novel quickly swept the world and became a masterpiece with cultural significance and permanent influence. It was even considered as one of the root causes of the outbreak of the American Civil War. The novel had a significant impact on society at that time. It raised awareness of slavery and promoted the movement to abolish it. It exerts a sense of balance in society and endows it with a force that helps to drive society towards a more fair, humane, and diverse direction.

**A stereotype of black people's image.** *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a novel about slavery in the United States, and the stereotype of white people on black images is also reflected in the novel. In the novel, black people are portrayed as negative images such as barbarism, incompetence, and moral decay in the eyes of some white people. The white characters in the novel generally believe that black people are naturally dull, lazy, unwilling to work, and often engage in defamation, insult, and other behaviors. They view black people as property and often abuse and maim them. By shaping these white characters, the author revealed some ugly stereotypes in white society at that time, which led to a lack of respect and discrimination against black people. These stereotypes indicate the irrational fear and discrimination and oppression based on racial prejudice in white society at that time. The negative stereotypes revealed in the novel have also fermented into a broader issue of racial discrimination, indicating that such ideas and speech

have become a recognized social culture, and these fixed patterns were difficult to change and dissolve in American society at that time.

**The attitude of white people towards black people.** The attitude of white characters towards black people in the story is also a typical manifestation of slavery society. For example, when Tom was sold to Mr. Simon, Simon violated and intimidated him, demonstrating oppression and exploitation of black people. When Bigger's father in St. Claire saw Eva and Tom playing together, he thought it was inappropriate because they should not be on the same level. These issues are all based on inherent racial biases and discrimination.

**The serious consequences of racial discrimination.** Due to the fact that black people are considered slaves and property, they face endless suffering and unfair treatment. They are forced to sell separately from their families, suffer cruel and severe corporal punishment and exploitation, lack education and basic rights, and even lack freedom. These consequences have had a long-term and widespread impact on the black community, including economic poverty, low social status, cultural imprisonment, and psychological trauma. Of course, this unjust and inhumane system has also had a profound impact on white slave owners and the entire American society, including threatening their values, moral values, and human dignity.

### **The Problem of Racial Discrimination in the United States and the Origin and Significance of the "Black Lives Matter" Movement**

The racial discrimination in the United States began during the colonial period, when white colonizers brought enslaved black people from the African continent to North America to cultivate land and engage in labor, forming a system of segregation based on skin color. In the following centuries, racial discrimination continued to exist, including various laws and policies restricting black people's voting rights, education rights, housing rights, etc. In addition, ethnic minorities such as Asians and Latinos have also experienced unequal treatment and discrimination in society, economy, and politics.

In terms of traditional culture, the slavery system in the United States is deeply rooted, forming a series of targeted racist theories, such as the theories of "natural inequality" and "social eugenics", which believe that black people and other races are not as intelligent and morally inferior to white people and are born slaves. These theories were widely believed by many people at that time and had a profound impact on American social thought, literary works, and political decision-making.

It is precisely the racial discrimination in American history that has led to a series of unequal treatment and restrictions, which have long marginalized black people in American society. Many black people have launched protests to fight for equal rights and improve living conditions. The most influential among them is the increasingly fierce "Black Lives Matter" movement in today's American society.

The "Black Lives Matter" movement now refers to a series of social movements carried out by black Americans to fight for equal rights and social justice. It aims to convey a strong anti-racism message to the general public through demonstrations, protests, and social media, advocating for the cessation of violence and discrimination against black people. The earliest traces of this movement can be traced back to the 1960s, when black people in the southern United States suffered from severe racial discrimination and oppression. They fought for equal rights and social justice through nonviolent protests and demonstrations. On May 25, 2020, African American George Floyd died due to violent law enforcement by the police, where he pressed his knee against his neck for more than 8 minutes. This incident led to the outbreak of the "Black Lives Matter" protest march in the United States, covering at least 140 cities in the United States, and at the moment when the COVID-19 is not over. At the same time as fighting the epidemic in the United States, there were also protests. The poor anti-epidemic efforts of the US government were not protested, but the death of a black person sparked such a large-scale protest. As most Americans think, COVID-19 is a short-term explosive event, and racial discrimination is a long-term historical problem in the United States, so the problem of racial discrimination is even more serious. The story in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is inextricably linked to contemporary racial discrimination in America.

In terms of the strategy of this movement, it advocates peaceful, nonviolent demonstrations and protests to attract more attention, and engaging in broader social discussions by posting content and photos related to racial discrimination on social media. In addition, the movement has established a website to unify initiatives from different regions and organizations. This is similar to an online platform that provides support, integrates services for individuals and groups, and builds bridges of connection and communication.

The significance of the "Black Lives Matter" movement lies in revealing and challenging the long-standing racial inequality in the United States, and calling on the US government and all sectors of society to work together to combat deep-seated racial discrimination and promote human rights movements worldwide. Due to its widespread influence and support, the movement has become a landmark action of the global human rights and social justice movement, and an important force in promoting social change in the United States and global social justice.

However, the "Black Lives Matter" movement encountered many challenges. Firstly, the movement has faced questioning and criticism from conservatives and the right-wing politicians. They accused the movement of encouraging violence and inciting the public, as well as showing disrespect and hostility towards the police. In addition, some people believe that the strategy differs from the goal. Some people believe that calling for the abolition of the

police department or the abolition of the penalty system can solve the problem, while others advocate for strengthening reforms and improving the police and judicial systems.

In summary, the "Black Lives Matter" movement has placed issues of race and discrimination at the forefront of public attention and sparked global opposition. Although facing challenges and controversies, it provides some extremely important space and creativity for the mind, language, and thinking. It showcases a new social consciousness through formulation, public scrutiny, and large-scale actions, promoting social construction based on equality, diversity, and justice.

### **Comparison and Analysis of the Novel and Movement**

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a novel that depicts slavery and racial discrimination, deeply showcasing the social, economic, and political inequalities faced by black people. Similarly, the "Black Lives Matter" movement aims to fight for equal rights and improve living conditions for black people, aiming to eliminate racial discrimination and police violence against and persecution of black people.

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the "Black Lives Matter" movement have both brought important influences and inspirations to people's understanding of racial discrimination. From *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, it can be seen that slavery and racial discrimination have had a devastating impact on individuals and society as a whole, and their economic, political, and cultural losses have long been irreparable.

However, there is a significant difference in the context of racial discrimination dealt with by *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the "Black Lives Matter" movement. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* depicts the scene of black people being enslaved and abused under the slave system in the 19th century southern United States, while the "Black Lives Matter" movement protests and counterattacks against the discrimination and persecution of black people against racism and police violence that still exist in modern American society.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a long novel with complex plot and numerous details, deeply revealing the devastating impact of slavery and racial discrimination on individuals and society. The "Black Lives Matter" movement is a social protest movement aimed at targeting police violence and the modern racism and discrimination faced by black people. The "Black Lives Matter" movement focuses on revealing the racial inequality that still exists in modern America, as well as the discrimination and persecution of black people by police violence. This movement has attracted the attention of the whole society to the issue through widespread dissemination, organizing demonstrations and protests, and proposing reform proposals, and has also promoted the equal rights and social status of black people.

### **Results and Discussion**

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* mainly tells the tragic story of the black slave Uncle Tom, who was obedient, loyal and kind, but ultimately killed alive. It deeply attacks and exposes the cruel slavery in America, shocking the entire American society. Although slavery has long been abolished in the United States today, the shadow of racial discrimination has been lingering in this country. The current "Black Lives Matter" protests are not only expressions of dissatisfaction from black groups towards the current state of life in the United States, but also a challenge to the deep-rooted racial discrimination in the United States.

In short, the "Black Lives Matter" movement and the events of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* tell people that the long-standing systemic racism, social injustice, racial and class conflicts in the United States are chronic diseases of American society and this historical legacy still deeply affects American society to this day. Through this movement, people will pay more attention to and reflect on the issues of racial discrimination and social injustice in modern society, thereby advocating and promoting true racial equality and social justice, and continuously pursuing the significant value of human society. Both this movement and this novel aim to bring change and a better future to African Americans. The connection between the two indicates that the ongoing struggle for equality and justice is meaningful.

What's more, racial discrimination has historical and contemporary backgrounds in many countries and regions. It is not only a form of discrimination, but also causes various social problems, such as social inequality, hate crimes, and division. Therefore, the importance of understanding and addressing racial discrimination is evident. We need to eliminate discrimination by establishing an equal and diverse social value system. This includes providing fair opportunities and treatment, combating discrimination, strengthening anti-racism education, and calling for broader ideologies and reforms. At the same time, we also need to conduct further research and exploration on race and the various discrimination issues it leads to, in order to increase our understanding and insight.

Achieving such goals may be difficult, but we can adopt some strategies and methods to help achieve these goals: cultivating diverse cultures and values; taking educational and advocacy measures; supporting legal means and reforms; promoting dialogue and cooperation.

The vast majority of people hope to create a more equal and just society, avoiding racial discrimination. In this process, understanding and addressing the importance of racial discrimination is a wise move to raise our awareness and promote change. We should unite, take action, and strive for a better future.

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