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“Womanhood, Essentialism, Racial Experience: An Intersectional Feminist Exploration of Toni Morrison’s *Tar Baby*”

“Womanhood, Essentialism, and Racial Experience: An Intersectional Feminist Exploration of Toni Morrison’s *Tar Baby*” analyzes the gendered binary of assimilation versus segregation through an intersectional feminist lens. The capstone includes three main sections: Morrison’s portrayal of black womanhood, segregation compared to assimilation, and lastly, assimilation as a gendered act. Toni Morrison constructs differing views of black identity and pairs these views alongside white colonialism in order to complicate the reader’s understanding of identity. The thesis relies heavily on Kimberlé Crenshaw’s essay “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” and Chimamanda Adichie’s “Danger of a Single Story.” Both of these black feminist theorists critique essentialism, which is the project of my capstone thesis. The paper works to analyze how Morrison positions assimilation and segregation in gendered terms in order to make a statement about the position of black women in American culture.