



**NADINE GORDIMER'S
POLITICAL IDEALS IN *SIX
FEET OF THE COUNTRY* AND
*ONCE UPON A TIME***

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Index

1. Abstract
2. Introduction
3. Historical Context
 - 3.1. British colonialism and Apartheid
 - 3.2. Colonial metaphors and the end of apartheid
4. Nadine Gordimer
 - 4.1. Biography
 - 4.2. Her ideologies
5. *Six Feet of the Country* and *Once Upon a Time*
 - 5.1. Analysis of the texts with the theory
 - 5.2. Themes inside the texts
6. Conclusions
7. Referencies

1. Abstract

In this Final Degree Project, we will be able to see an explanation of what South Africa was like in the times of Apartheid and segregation between people of white and black color, where blacks were excluded from society, they had no voice and did not have the human rights that all people should have in their lives.

In addition, I will also talk about the British colonialism that took place in the country and how it affected the people who lived there, where the colonizers forced them to leave behind their customs, traditions, and languages to adapt to those of the British colonizers.

Furthermore, I will talk about Nadine Gordimer, with a brief introduction to her biography and, in addition, a recapitulation of her ideals as a white woman of British descent, but a woman who defends and fights for the rights and freedom of black people, as if she were one of them.

On the other hand, I will comment on the texts called *Once Upon a Time* and *Six Feet of the Country*, where I will relate both texts to the aforementioned theory and I will carry out a practical part with the most important themes in both stories, such as silence, fear, racism, hypocrisy, or irony, among others.

Finally, I will include some conclusions on what I personally think about the issues explained in my final work, and comment on how I see the topic today, as well as a vision for the future.

The key words of my Final Degree Project will be the following: Apartheid, Colonialism, Nadine Gordimer, Segregation, and Fear.

2. Introduction

To begin with my introduction of my Final Degree Project, I would like to say that I have decided to choose this topic because it is one of the topics I have studied the most during my degree and it is a stage in the life of South African people which contains many historical and literary richness.

In this paper I will discuss the hardships that the black majority had to go through for many years of their lives, or even their entire lives, because of a system that ruled by and for racial segregation.

Apartheid is one of the aspects that caused black people's lives to change forever, leaving them without human rights and without the right to vote, separating white from black people and living thousands of kilometers away from each other. In addition, they did not have the opportunity to have an inter-racial marriage and although they were the majority of the population, black people did not have good labour opportunities.

Although apartheid was abolished in 1990, today we can see how racism and segregation is still in our lives, and not only in South Africa, but all over the world, leaving many black people without human rights and without the right to a better life than they had before.

Moreover, we will talk about how colonialism impacts in South Africa, where the Dutch and the British fought to get the territories they wanted, forcing the people who lived there to change their language and religion, and to follow customs and traditions totally different to what they were used to.

Nadine Gordimer, the author of the two short stories I am going to analyze, which are, *Once Upon a Time* and *Six Feet of the Country* was a South African white woman who fought for the rights of black people. Gordimer was against apartheid and what she wanted was an egalitarian country, without distinction of race or gender, and with equal human rights for the entire population, regardless of whether you were black or white.

In most of her texts she talks about apartheid and the racial segregation that South Africa suffered in those intense years. She mentions it publicly and without fear that the authorities would do something against her, in fact, many of her texts in which she talks about these issues, were banned.

Her short stories are less known than her novels, and that is why I have decided to analyze the texts called *Once Upon a Time* and *Six Feet of the Country*, which I consider to be very different from each other, as one of the texts is told from the point of view of a white family, and the other from the point of view of black workers.

Once Upon a Time is about a white family that live in a suburb where there have been many robberies and violence, so they decide to install security systems based on electric fence and sharp blades. The family's son wanted to play, so he climbed the fence and died.

Six Feet of the Country tells the story of a white couple who hire black people to do farming, the cleaning, and cooking for them. One of the workers' brothers dies of pneumonia and the white authorities lose the boy's body.

3. Historical Context

3.1 British colonialism and apartheid

As in most of the colonization all over the world, the arrival of the British Empire in South Africa, more specifically in the Cape Colony (also known as the Cape of Good Hope), changed the lives of the South Africans who already lived there. Although the British people had as their main aim to control the Cape to improve their trade routes to the East, later on they realized that the territory had many more useful things for the economic development of the colony, such as, agriculture or craft.

The British came with great changes in the life of the people, not only of the natives, but also in the Boers' life, since English had to be adapted as the only language to communicate between them, and they also established Anglicanism.

Moreover, British colonization is one of the largest settlements ever seen in Africa, with more than 4.000 settlers arriving to the Cape. Many of the settlers who came to South Africa were farmers, and as it says in an article: “Los colonos que permanecieron como agricultores hicieron una contribución significativa a la agricultura, plantando maíz, centeno y cebada. También comenzaron a cultivar lana, que luego se convirtió en un comercio muy lucrativo. Alguno de los colonos, que eran comerciantes de profesión, también hicieron una contribución significativa a los negocios y la economía. Nuevas ciudades como Grahamstown y Port Elizabeth, por lo tanto, crecieron rápidamente.”¹

Not only during the British colonization, but also after it, one of the biggest problems was the segregation between black and white people, called Apartheid, which was one of the negative aspects that black people suffered the most from the minority of white people, especially the Dutch and the British colonies. This political system was based primarily

¹ My translation: “The settlers who remained as farmers made a significant contribution to agriculture, planting corn, rye, and barley. They also began to grow wool, which later became a very lucrative trade. Some of the colonists, who were merchants, also made a significant contribution to business and economy. Therefore, new cities like Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth grew rapidly.” Casiopea. 2019. “EL IMPERIO BRITÁNICO EN ÁFRICA: LA ANEXIÓN DE COLONIA DEL CABO”. SobreHistoria. Acceso el 23 de abril. <https://sobrehistoria.com/el-imperio-britanico-en-africa-la-anexion-de-colonia-del-cabo/> (9-9-2019)

on stripping the vast black majority of human rights, which the white population did enjoy.

Racial segregation came in 1948 by the National Party called “Afrikaner”, and they based their ideals on keeping black people always separated from white people, as they believed that for the development and growth of the country, people of different races had to live differently and separated.

The black majority did not have the right to vote, and they obtained less than half the money than white people, even if they held the same job. In addition, they had the right to an education, however, in much worse centres and in worse conditions than those of white children; moreover, they lived in different neighbourhoods, which were a long way from each other, as it will be further explained in chapter five.

As it is published in La Vanguardia, “La segregación era tan extrema que blancos y negros no podían ser pareja o casarse, utilizar el mismo baño público, ir en el mismo autobús ni bañarse en las mismas playas, entre muchas otras restricciones”.²

Moreover, as Nadine Gordimer says in one of her interviews, “All my life, it’s just been taken for granted that whites went onto the beaches and blacks just were not allowed. Now, growing up there as a white child, I suppose I thought that blacks didn’t want to go to the beach, or that they didn’t want to go into the water. Didn’t question it. And it’s only when you begin to think and question and doubt that you become a rebel in your society, because you see how you have been living the lie all the time.” Nadine Gordimer, entrevista por Bill Moyers, 4 de noviembre de 1990, acceso 23 de abril de 2023, <https://billmoyers.com/1990/11/04/nadine-gordimer-on-politics-and-people/>

² My own translation: “segregation was so extreme that whites and blacks could not be a couple or married, use the same public toilet, travel on the same bus or bathe in the same beaches, among many other restrictions”. Ros, Laia. 2019. “¿Qué era el “apartheid”?” La Vanguardia. Acceso el 28 de marzo. <https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/junior-report/20190506/462004443147/que-apartheid.html> (05-06-2019)

Resistance to apartheid by black people lasted for many years and it was very complicated, until the year 1990 arrived, which was the year of changes, where all the laws that discriminated black people began to be abolished, and in this way, many of the supporters who were against racial segregation were released from prison, such as Nelson Mandela, among others.

Although apartheid is over, nowadays there are still consequences, especially poverty and unemployment, which continue to score higher numbers in the black population, and many of the South African people continue living in a disorganized and unequal society, with few opportunities to get jobs.

As Nadine Gordimer said in one of her interviews:

“Certainly, the people who are close to me are happier. They feel freer. I’m thinking, for example, of a black friend, a regional organizer for the Congress. He’s twenty-nine. At the age of seventeen, when he was in the youth group of the ANC, he went to prison, to Robbin Island, for five years. After prison, he went into trade-union work. He’s spent his whole life in black ghettos in great poverty with great dignity. And now he and his young wife, who is an actress, have just moved into an apartment where only whites have lived before. They have no furniture there, just a bed for themselves, a bed for the baby, and a big TV, of course. But I think the very space around them is something extraordinary. It’s still a struggle, but they are living more fully than they did. But they are city people; for country people, things are as they were. They are very remote, very poor, very dependent on the white farmers they work for. It’s very difficult to organize them. There are still huge, huge problems to be tackled.” Nadine Gordimer, interview by Claudia Dreifus, “An Interview with Nadine Gordimer”, *The Progressive Magazine*, 2014, access on the 23rd of April of 2023, <https://progressive.org/magazine/interview-nadine-gordimer/>

As in the Apartheid, something very similar happened with British colonialism, and the colonists had 25.000 slaves, so there was a huge racial discrimination, not only within the Cape, but also abroad, where black and white people had to live separated, and with different living conditions, discriminating black people. British colonialism and Apartheid were two very different systems of South African life and left a lasting impact

on their society. Furthermore, the aim of both was the dominance and oppression of white over black people, imposing political and discriminatory control to maintain the power.

In the British colonialism there was white power over indigenous populations, justifying exploitation and colonial control, while in the apartheid, laws were established for the segregation and discrimination of people according to their race, which we can also see as an authority control.

Moreover, in both systems there was a very strong economic control by the white minorities, as the employees and servants of whites were always black people, who did not earn a quarter of what white people earned, and there was a huge inequality.

3.2. Colonial metaphors and the end of apartheid

After the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990, Pieter Botha, the country's president at the time, who did not want equal rights for black and white people, was forced to resign. This event helped to bring the abolition of apartheid, and in 1994, black South African were able to vote for the first time to elect Nelson Mandela as the country's president.

Between 1996 and 1999, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up, although the victims of apartheid did not agree with Mandela's pardon to white people and blacks wanted justice, the commission has become an example of justice for the entire world.

Although many years have passed since apartheid was abolished, South Africa's economy remains as it was in those years, with significant inequality between black and white people. Despite this, the black community is still the majority of the country, with three quarters of the 55 million South Africans.

Finally, I would like to add a comment Nadine Gordimer gave in one of her interviews after the apartheid was abolished, where she was asked if she thought anything had changed after apartheid:

“Well, I think that we are trying to – when I say we, I mean people who understand that there has to be change, and people that truly want effective change, who don’t want to keep up the old white supremacy under some new guise. And I think that we have to be very, very realistic about it, that there’s a tremendous amount of rethinking to be done. Basically, it must start, of course, with the change of the laws. That’s the only way, the only basis upon which you can build a decent society. But we’ve got to get rid of all the apartheid laws”. Nadine Gordimer, entrevista por Bill Moyers, 4 de noviembre de 1990, acceso 23 de abril de 2023, <https://billmoyers.com/1990/11/04/nadine-gordimer-on-politics-and-people/>

4. Nadine Gordimer

4.1 Biography

Nadine Gordimer was born in Springs, situated in South Africa, and she died in Johannesburg. She was a South African author, and she was involved in political issues, as she was a founding member of the Congress of South African Writers (COSAW) and a member of the African National Congress (ANC), which she supported even when it was banned.

Her father was Jewish jeweler, and although her mother was British, she was against racial segregation and colonialism throughout her life, which she publicly opposed. Moreover, she was the first South African and the first woman in twenty-five years to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. After apartheid was removed, she continued to fight for minority rights and supported the fight against AIDS and environmental protection.

4.2 Political ideologies

Gordimer was one of those people who fought against apartheid and publicly advocated for the human rights and social justice that was so dear to South Africa. Her protests can be seen in most of her texts, where she writes for the rights of the black minority and the discrimination and racial inequality suffered in her country at that time. In addition, she fought not only against racial discrimination, but also against gender orientation.

Moreover, Gordimer considered herself a socialist and she believed in restructuring the country to achieve a more economically and socially egalitarian society, without discrimination between whites and blacks.

In one of her interesting interviews, Bill Moyers asked her about the problem of being able to say “I agree or disagree with you” without getting into issues of racism:

“To me the real test of a normal relationship – because we’ve never had normal relationships with blacks, between blacks and whites in South Africa – is when you can dislike the other person, or you can disagree with them without this being interpreted as anti-black or anti-white. And this is

something that one of the few successes of human relationships in my life – God knows I’ve messed up many but that I do have relationships with certain black friends with whom I can really say what I think. That I can disagree hotly, and I know that they’re not going to say, “Oh, well, this is because she’s white”. But it’s taken a whole lifetime to get round to that.” Nadine Gordimer, entrevista por Bill Moyers, 4 de noviembre de 1990, acceso 23 de abril de 2023, <https://billmoyers.com/1990/11/04/nadine-gordimer-on-politics-and-people/>

As it will be addressed next, most of her works reflect her desire to change the country and the importance of freedom of speech and, above all, her fight against oppression and injustice. As she said in one of her interviews, “But I write about it from within. I don’t write about it. I write about how it shapes the people who are shaped by it. To write about it is to write nonfiction, to write essays, which I have done of course, but in my novels and stories they’re not about...” Nadine Gordimer, entrevista por Simon Stanford, “Nadine Gordimer Interview”, *The Nobel Prize*, 26 de abril de 2005, acceso 23 de abril de 2023, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1991/gordimer/interview/>

In the book *Telling Times*, written by Nadine Gordimer, we can see how she talks about the different ethnicities that existed in South Africa during her childhood and what she was able to see through the eyes of a little child who did not know and did not understand why people of different colors lived separately from each other, and why her black friends could not go to the same places where Nadine had permission to go, for example, the Zoo, school or restaurants.

An example of this can be: “The division of the people into two great races – black and white – and the subdivision of the white into Afrikaans – and English-speaking groups provides a diversity of cultural heritage that can make two South African children seem almost as strange to each other as if they had come from different countries.” Nadine Gordimer, *Telling Times: writing and living, 1954-2008* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010) 3.

Cultural heritage is the heritage of a country left by its ancestors, maintained to the present day, and passed on from generation to generation. The cultural heritage affects various communities of black South Africans and white citizens.

That is, in South Africa there is a great division of people of different races between blacks and whites, and between British and black South Africans, which means that we are talking about a country with many races, who all live close to each other, and where nowadays, even though apartheid has disappeared, black people are still less important than whites, not only in South Africa, but also in all around the world.

It is very important to comment that although Nadine Gordimer defends and fights for the human rights of black people, she also speaks and writes her works from the point of view of the most fortunate ones, who were white people and of whom she says she is proud of. That is, we will never fully understand how black people were treated and what they suffered with the restrictions and the few rights they had, because to understand how black people lived, you have to listen to them.

“In the fifties if you wanted to maintain friendly relations with blacks, work with them, discuss with them, do music or politics with them – everything was still possible. For about 12 years, the two communities frequented each other. Naturally, the social taboo existed. It was even very pronounced, and more than one ordinary white citizen considered my husband and me crazy for having black friends.” Nadine Gordimer, *Conversations with Nadine Gordimer* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, cop. 1990) 109-110.

In the quote above, when Nadine Gordimer talks about “black friends”, we have to emphasize that during apartheid it was totally forbidden to have relations of any kind between black and white people. White families could not invite black people into their homes, nor could they go to a restaurant together for a meal, sit in a park and talk, or even go to the beach or travel into the public transport together. So, when Nadine talks about black friendships, they are friends that she had hidden, so that she would not have to face the authorities and black people would not be harmed because of going to places that were not authorized for them.

What is more, in the stories *Once Upon a Time* and *Six Feet of the Country*, there is no relationship between black and white people. That is, the only relation that exists in these stories is that of a white family and their black workers, who used to do the cooking,

cleaning, and gardening, and this was the only way for black people to enter to the white people's houses.

Moreover, in this quote, Nadine implies that white people only worked as the bosses of the blacks, and that it was they, both women and men, who did the domestic work for the white families. "Black men do all the physical labour in our country, because no white man wants to dig a road or load a truck." Nadine Gordimer, *Telling Times: writing and living, 1954-2008* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010) 64.

In the stories I will discuss below, the place of black people within the scenes is only as servants working for the satisfaction of the white families. None of the black characters in the stories have voice, that is, in the story *Once Upon a Time*, the only ones who speak are the white husband and his wife, and sometimes, the black maid gives some opinions to help the white family feel more comfortable with the black people living outside the area and all the riots.

However, the opinions are not told from the voice of the black maid, but from the voice of the writer, for example: "the trusted housemaid of the man and wife and little boy was so upset by this misfortune befalling a friend left, as she herself often was, with responsibility for the possessions of the man and his wife and little boy that she implored her employers to have burglar bars attached to the doors and windows of the house, and an alarm system install". Nadine Gordimer, *Jump and other stories* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1991) 42.

In addition, in the quote below, Nadine Gordimer believes that white people, since they are the luckiest people in this society, should not continue to live there, as in this way, she believes they contribute to apartheid and the division of white and black people, that in fact, they are all human and people who deserve to have the same human rights.

Moreover, white people, despite the fact that apartheid was still in their lives, continued to contribute to making it more complicated and difficult for black people. That is, white people were still the lucky ones, as they owned land and had great access to jobs, without any restriction of rights in their lives and work.

On the other hand, black people were still the most unfortunate, as they worked as cooks and servants exclusively for white families. They had no human rights and were not allowed to work on what they wanted, that is, they only worked for the satisfaction and good life of the whites.

“Do not think that we, on the white side of privilege, are the people we might be in a society that has no sides at all. We do not suffer, but we are coarsened. Even to continue to live here is to acquiesce in some measure to apartheid.” Nadine Gordimer, *Telling Times: writing and living, 1954-2008* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010) 67.

Moreover, she also believes that the best way to defeat and eliminate the segregation is by working all together, as we all are human: “Living apart, black, and white are destroying themselves morally in the effort. Living together, it is just possible that we might survive white domination, black domination, and all the other guises that hide us from each other and discover ourselves to be identically human.” Nadine Gordimer, *Telling Times: writing and living, 1954-2008* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010) 70.

However, not everyone thought the same. Whites supported apartheid in some way, contributing by hiring black people to do domestic and land work for them, for their satisfaction, and this made apartheid more complicated. On the contrary, if whites had stood up to the authorities, and helped black people to have more rights, maybe things would have been different in those days.

Many women in those years hid, since there was a lot of inequality not only of race, but also of gender, and as we have seen in the text *Once Upon a Time*, women did not have the same power as men in making decisions, and many of them had no voice, the government did not want to listen to them. For this reason, women who belonged to a government organization or an NGO hid so as not to be discovered.

An example of this can be: “Some years, she was president of several organizations ... Her position was a curious one. Unlike most of the other women, she did not confine herself to the particular section of the community to which she belonged.” Nadine Gordimer, *Telling Times: writing and living, 1954-2008* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010) 12.

As we can also see in the next book I will analyze, *Once Upon a Time*, the maid who worked for the white family was a black woman, to whom Nadine Gordimer gives no name and no voice, to reflect what society was like in apartheid times.

For this reason, we can understand that black women were even less important and had much less power than men. In *Telling Times*, we can see that the authorities gave black people a kind of “passbook”, with which they could enter to places exclusively for black people.

However, these passbooks were only issued to men, so women did not have even the right to get a pass to enter the places for them. This makes us understand that during apartheid, black women only served to be the servants of white families, and never left their homes.

Moreover, as we have been able to see in the theoretical part, apartheid was based on separating black and white people, leaving the black people without human rights, without freedom of expression, and denying them job opportunities (they could only enter to white people houses if they were working for them).

They could not go to the same places, white people could enter and go everywhere, while there were lots of restrictions for black people, and children did not have any opportunities in education, while white children could study in the school, they liked the most.

As we can see in these examples:

“There was nothing to see beyond the limits of the suburbs but “the location” – an urban slum where the African industrial workers and servants were huddled in segregation from their white employers.” Nadine Gordimer, *Telling Times: writing and living, 1954-2008* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010) 12.

“The real life of any community – restaurants, bars, hotels, clubs, and coffee bars – has no place for the African man or woman. They serve in all these, but they cannot come in and sit down. Art galleries, cinemas, theatres, golf courses and sports clubs, even the libraries are closed to them. In the post offices and all other government offices, they are

served at segregated counters. They have no vote.” Nadine Gordimer, *Telling Times: writing and living, 1954-2008* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010) 65.

“There were junior and senior state schools in the town, where education for white children was free, but my sister and I were sent as day scholars to the local convent; the Dominican nuns.” Nadine Gordimer, *Telling Times: writing and living, 1954-2008* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010) 12.

“Bantu Education which is now standard in schools for black children – inferior schooling based on a reduced syllabus that insists the black child cannot attain the same standard of education as the white child.” Nadine Gordimer, *Telling Times: writing and living, 1954-2008* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010) 63.

She wanted to eat with some friends, but they could not: “I had bought a picnic lunch with me, and so had Alice, my friend, for we knew that we shouldn’t be able to lunch together in the airport restaurant. What we hadn’t realized was that there was no place where we could eat together.” Nadine Gordimer, *Telling Times: writing and living, 1954-2008* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010) 69.

During her childhood, Nadine Gordimer was an innocent girl like all children. She was not aware of what black people suffered in the country where she lived, since no one ever explained to her the social, political, and racial problems that existed during those years. When she grew up, she began to understand the injustice that was being experienced and that was when she began her fight against inequality and racism.

“Shall I forget that when I was a child, I was taught that I must never use a cup from which our black servant had drunk?” Nadine Gordimer, *Telling Times: writing and living, 1954-2008* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010) 64.

Furthermore, the role of children in both *Once Upon a Time* and *Six Feet of the Country* is quite obsolete. In the first story, there is only one child, the son of the white couple, who is named throughout the story, but he has no voice. In the story we do not see any friends, he only leaves his house to go for a walk in the area where he lives with his parents, but he does not play, eat, or live with any other children.

We can see the child's innocence when at the end of the story, wanting to imitate his cat, he pricks himself on the barriers that his parents had put up to prevent theft and disturbances by black people. The boy was isolated from reality, the only contact he had with black people was with the maid and the gardener that the family had hired, but in the story, we do not see him interact with anyone else.

On the other hand, in the story of *Six Feet of the Country*, we do not see any children, they are all adults, both the white couple and the black employees.

Nadine Gordimer also talks about the emigration that took place in South Africa, where many families moved to other nearby towns in order to obtain a better quality of life. In the book she tells readers what the houses were like, inspired by American magazines, with many windows. That is the reason why we can see a clear example of the colonialism that was suffered in South Africa, where African people left aside and forgot their customs and traditions and they adapted to those of the colonizers, completely changing their way of life.

In addition, in both *Once Upon a Time* and *Six Feet of the Country*, the stories are told in domestic spaces of white families, where the only people who work there were black men and women, doing the cooking, cleaning, and gardening. This allows us to understand that although Nadine Gordimer defends black people and she is against apartheid and segregation, she is still a white person, and moreover, a British person, who were the ones who colonized South Africa.

In the book *Conversations with Nadine Gordimer*, I have found a good example of colonialism. During the years in which the colonizers wanted to gain the land of South Africa, the inhabitants were forced to leave behind their customs, traditions, clothing, and even their language, adapting to what the colonizers wanted, as we can see in the following example:

“Black writers write in English. And they encounter exactly the same difficulties as do the black writers from the former French colonies, because their introduction to written literature – quite different from their own which is oral – occurs in the language of their

conquerers. Some write in Afrikaans. However, owing to national pride, some are beginning to write in their native language.” Nadine Gordimer, *Conversations with Nadine Gordimer* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, cop. 1990) 116.

Moreover, the interrogator asks Nadine if she believes that the political situation in South Africa has affected her as a writer, more than living, belonging, and writing in another place. That is, in a more liberal country where everyone had freedom of expression without fear of what the authorities could do to you when you gave your own opinion. To his question, Nadine answers very clearly, she says she has been affected, not only by the problem between black and white people, but also because the political authorities have managed to shape the lives of the people around her.

As we have been able to see both in the theoretical part of my Final Degree Project, and in the practical part with some examples, here we can see another quote where Nadine Gordimer talks about the separation that was suffered in South Africa at that time, and that unfortunately, it still happens nowadays.

“South Africa is the focus of plural conflict – between black and white, between emergent people and colonial culture, between democracy and timarchy, between totalitarianism and liberalism ... this is a multi-apartheid society ... everyone wants to be white, at the top of the pile.” Nadine Gordimer, *Conversations with Nadine Gordimer* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, cop. 1990) 87.

In this quote from *Conversations with Nadine Gordimer*, we can see how she answers a question giving her own opinion, and states that everyone wants to be white in order to have the human rights that everyone deserves, to be able to go to all the places they want, to work where they want, to be with the people they love, and also to have money to be able to live with peace.

5. *Six Feet of the Country and Once Upon a Time*

Six Feet of the Country is a collection of short stories that deals with issues such as apartheid, racial discrimination, and colonialism. The story tells the life of a white couple who buy a farm far from the city and hire black employees to help them with the farm work. The brother of one of the employees dies of pneumonia and the authorities bury the body without the family's permission. However, Petrus gives them twenty pounds to be able to exhume the body and bury it himself, with the surprise that the person buried was not his brother. At the end of the story, it is clear that the authorities lost the body of the boy, so we can see it as an ineptitude of the white authorities in the country.

In the short story called *Once Upon a Time*, Nadine talks about how racial segregation affects all people living in South Africa, both black and white. This text tells the story of a white family that lives in a house protected by a security wall, as they are afraid of the robberies and riots that often occur in the neighborhood. As fear continues to haunt them every day, the family hire a black man to build a higher wall and decide to put up a security system with materials such as spears, picks, pieces of broken glass and metals. Days later, the family's son decides to climb the wall and the blades pierce his skin, leading to his death.

To start talking about these two texts by Nadine Gordimer, we will begin by naming some similarities and differences in terms of their plot and main themes. First of all, both texts deal with social and political issues relevant to South Africa.

Nadine Gordimer is known for her political and social engagement in her work, and both stories reflect her concern with political and social issues in South Africa at different times. "Six Feet of the Country" focuses on the relationship between a black employee and his white employer in the apartheid era, while "Once Upon a Time" explores the consequences of apartheid on the daily life of a white family.

The text *Six Feet of the Country* is set in the apartheid era in South Africa, so racism and discrimination are the main theme of the play, while *Once Upon a Time* is set in the years

after the abolition of the apartheid, in which we can see the theme of racism, but in a more subtle way.

In terms of similarities, as we mentioned before, both works deal with issues such as racism and racial discrimination, for example, *Six Feet of the Country* focuses on the struggle for freedom, and *Once Upon a Time* on segregation and fear.

In both texts, the characters struggle to maintain their identity, in *Six Feet of the Country* the characters struggle to achieve a society that is not divided by race, as the black employee feels trapped, whereas in *Once Upon a Time*, the characters fight to maintain their identity in a dangerous environment, as the white family feels increasingly isolated in their community.

Finally, both texts have an ambiguous ending, in *Six Feet of the Country* we do not know what will happen to the black employee and in *Once Upon a Time* we do not know what will happen to the white family after the death of their young son.

5.1 Relation of the texts with the theory

Through her stories, Nadine Gordimer portrays the pain, frustration and injustice of the apartheid system, and the daily struggle of people to survive and maintain their dignity and identity in an oppressive environment.

Both *Six Feet of the Country* and *Once Upon a Time* reflect the impacts of the apartheid on the daily lives of people living in South Africa. Through her writings, Gordimer denounces the injustice and oppression of the system and presents readers with a critical vision and committed to the fight for human rights and social justice. Gordimer also shows how racial segregation and discrimination affect people in South Africa.

Once Upon a Time takes place in an environment that reflects segregation and discrimination and a great difference between the suffering of the black people and the luxurious life of the white couple. As in apartheid, people of different races had to live separately, that is, the white family live in a safe neighbourhood, while nearby neighbourhoods are populated by coloured people who live in poverty and marginalization.

During British colonization, the natives were forced to forget their religion, language, and customs, and adapt to those of the British. We can see the following example as a way of colonizing black people, since if they wanted to enter the white neighbourhood, what they saw as a “paradise”, the only way to enter was by working and being employees of the white families: “There were riots, but these were outside the city, where people of another colour were quartered. These people were not allowed into the suburb except as reliable housemaids and gardeners”. Nadine Gordimer, *Jump and other stories* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1991) 41.

In addition, the fact that they had to live separately and in different places not only has to do with racial segregation and discrimination, but also with colonization, since the power of the white minority predominated over black people, and they were isolated from the entire population, with no option to have human rights.

For Nadine Gordimer, these segregated suburbs are an example of colonialism, an attempt to consolidate white wealth through property and physically separate black and white people.

Furthermore, Gordimer emphasizes the disastrous legacy of colonialism in another very clear way in the text. At the beginning of the text, the author explains that years ago there was a mine under her house, and she realizes that indigenous black South Africans worked there, and she named the Chopi and Tsonga peoples: “the house that surrounds me while I sleep is built on undermined ground ... the misbeats of my heart tailed off like the last muffled flourishes on one of the wooden xylophones made by the Chopi and Tsonga migrant miners who might have been down there, under me in the earth at that moment.” [40].

We can understand this as a structural racism of South African society, in which black workers performed dangerous jobs for minimum wages to enrich white authorities. Moreover, this shows in a metaphoric way that the wealth of the white family is built on the suffering and exploitation of black workers.

In addition, Gordimer uses irony to make social criticism, such as the hypocrisy of building electric barriers to protect themselves from the black riots who wanted to rob in the neighbourhood, when in fact, the danger was inside the house. What is more, at the end of the story we can see how the son of the family dies trying to climb the electric fences just like his cat did.

The family does not blame themselves for the child’s death, so they try to blame the black workers they hired to install the fences. No matter how guilty the black workers seem to be, we readers understand that it is the family’s fault for taking the paranoia and fear of violence to the extreme of installing fences so dangerous for those who live inside the house, especially the child and the cat, who are both innocent of what is happening outside.

In addition, Nadine Gordimer uses satire to explain the couple’s inability to see that their fear and the woman’s paranoia towards black South Africans has to do with racism, even though they do not want to see it, as we can see in the following example: “... with a

plaque for their gates lettered YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED over the silhouette of a would-be-intruder. He was masked; it could not be said if he was black or white, and therefore proved the property owner was no racist.” [41]

Something very similar happens in the text of *Six Feet of the Country*, also written by Nadine Gordimer, in which we can see segregation and discrimination between its lines.

The white couple decides to escape from the city centre, the suburbs, social tensions, and fear of violence, and start a new life in the countryside, as we can see in this example: “when Johannesburg people speak of “tension”, they don’t mean hurrying people in crowded streets, the struggle for money, or the general competitive character of city life. They mean the guns under the white men’s pillows and the burglar bar son the white men’s windows. They mean those strange moments on city pavements when a black man won’t stand aside for a white man”. Nadine Gordimer, *Six Feet of the Country* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) 8-9.

“Now I’m the one who’ll have to do all the dirty work. I suppose.”, “As I had expected, it turned out to be quite a business. I had to notify the police as well as the health authorities and answer a lot of tedious questions.”, “he just kept on looking at me, out of his knowledge that white men have everything, can do anything; if they don’t, it is because they won’t.” [11-12 -13].

These three quotes are a clear example of the power that whites had over black people and the obsolete relationship they had. Black employees do not have the power to bury the young man themselves, it is the white protagonist who must intervene, and only he can speak with the white authorities and negotiate for the recovery of the body, which we can see as white supremacy and power.

Furthermore, the white employer believes it is a waste of money for poor people like Petrus to pay, so that the white authorities can dig up his brother’s body, so that he and his father can bury him as they wish. As we can see, this is another example of supremacy and power: “I took it in irritation more than in astonishment, really – irritation at the waste, the uselessness of this sacrifice by people so poor. Just like the poor everywhere, I thought, who stint themselves the decencies of life to ensure themselves the decencies

of death. So incomprehensible to people like Lerice and me, who regard life as something to be spent extravagantly and, if we think about death at all, regard it as the final bankruptcy.” [15]

These workers are being colonized, many of them have had to leave their country, their family, their customs and even their own language in order to go to what they call “paradise”, and in this way, work for white families and so they can earn some money to help their relatives: “A number of relatives must have walked the seven or eight hundred miles from poverty to the Paradise of *zoot* suites, police raids and black slum townships that is their *Egoli*, City of Gold – the African name of Johannesburg”. [11].

Here we can see how immigrants believe that Johannesburg is the paradise and a better place to live out of poverty, when in fact, you find something much worse, like violence and discrimination against black people.

Finally, something interesting that I found while reading the text is that Petrus calls his white employer “baas” [13], a word in the Afrikáans language, and he uses it to refer to his boss. During apartheid, this term was used by black people, who were considered inferior, to refer to their white employers, so we can understand that the word contains a connotation of subordination and inequality. It reflects the imbalanced power relations that existed between white employers and their black workers during apartheid.

5.2 Themes inside the texts

I would like to mention that the employees in the text *Once Upon a Time*, both the maid and the gardener were black, whom the woman of the family calls as “trustworthy housemaid” and “itinerant gardener” [40]. These two people were the ones in charge of cooking, cleaning the house, and do the gardening. In this text, Nadine Gordimer suppresses the voices of both characters as a metaphor for what really happened when segregation existed, as black people did not have rights for anything and were not important to the white community. Also, one of the key aspects of apartheid that I mentioned earlier was the control and suppression of the voice of black employees, and there was a climate of fear and repression, which sought to keep the black population in silent.

It is for this reason that the employees do not speak anything during the text, they have no voice, except for the maid, who gives some opinions on how to make a security fence, to which the white family always answer with “You are right” [43]. I believe that, in this case, the maid gives them advice to keep the family happy and calm despite the paranoia with which they live every day. In addition, the maid gives them some opinions and helps them to create a security fence for the thefts and disturbances in the area, just to keep the white family happy, so that she will not be fire of the job and the house, as it is her only way of earning money for her main needs.

Another example of this could be: “The wife said, she is right, let us take heed of her advice.” [42]

With all the security of the bars and fences that they have put in the house, now it seems that they live inside a prison, and this is another way of understanding the silence in this text, since the prisoners are always silenced and have no voice.

Black people lived in a prison, and they had no voice and opportunity to say what they really thought was important. What is more, they could not do what they most wanted to do and lived a life locked inside the power of the white minority.

In addition to this, there is a moment in the story when the white family goes for a walk in the village where they live, and they notice that all the houses have security fences, and the windows and doors are boarded up. This may be a metaphor that Nadine Gordimer uses to explain in an indirect way what black people had to live with during apartheid, that is, to live locked up under the power of the authorities.

Some examples of this could be: “So from every window and door in the house where they were living happily ever after they now saw the trees and sky through bars” [42] and “When the man and wife and little boy took the pet dog for its walk round the neighbourhood streets they no longer paused to admire this show of roses or that perfect lawn; these were hidden behind an array of different varieties of security fences, walls and devices.” [43].

In my opinion, Nadine Gordimer uses the silence in *Once Upon a Time* as a metaphor of denial and to claim the few rights that black people had in those years of apartheid. Both white citizens and the authorities ignored what black people wanted to say, they were silenced and could not give their opinion on any issue.

That is, there was no freedom of expression for black people, while white people were able to express their opinions without fear of what might happen to them. In addition, they had human rights that black people should also have had, because, in my point of view, all people are equal, regardless of race or skin colour.

Silence is also one of the most significant themes in the text called *Six Feet of the Country*. The black workers have no voice during the story, they are only heard when the workers kept Petrus' bother, who is an illegal immigrant, secretly for fear of what the white couple might tell them when they found out. The man from the white family asks the workers why they never told him that they had hidden Petrus' brother, and at that moment, several workers give him an answer, while others, we can only see their names, but we do not know anything about them.

Unlike in *Once Upon a Time*, in the text of *Six Feet of the Country* the workers do have names, as I mentioned before, for example, Albert, Franz, Petrus, Dora the cook and Jacob the gardener. In contrast, as in the previous text, these characters have no voice, and they

are continually silenced and isolated from the problems that occur, like the death of Petrus' brother, and how the white authorities did not want to give him the body, so that his family could bury him.

The only character who has voice is Petrus, the boy's brother who, looking for a better place to live away from the hardships that he lived in his town, and thinking that he was going to a better place with more opportunities, he dies of pneumonia.

In my opinion, Petrus is not silenced in the text because Nadine Gordimer found a way to vindicate the silence, hardship and discrimination experienced by black people during apartheid, and she used Petrus to do so, since Petrus is the clear image of the anger and disappointment that black people had to live when the white authorities did not pay attention to what they wanted, and treated them as worthless and not important people.

In the text we can see that the white authorities made the mistake of giving the family the wrong body, which was not Petrus' brother. However, I believe that white authorities did this to silence the black family again and to believe that the person they were burying was Petrus' brother, when in fact the body was another black immigrant.

Here we can see another example of how little black people mattered during apartheid, and even more if they were immigrants who they left their country of origin in search of a better life. The white authorities did not mind giving them another body and gave them one of another immigrants, who was not Petrus' brother. They did not even care about Petrus and his father's opinion, who came from his country to be able to bury his dead son, and this is where we realize how important black people were to white people, they were not considered for nothing, and they would do anything to keep them in silent.

Some examples of this could be: "Unfortunately, it was not impossible to get the body back. The authorities said that it was somewhat irregular, but that since the hygiene conditions had been fulfilled, they could not refuse permission for exhumation. I found out that, with the undertaker's charges, it would cost twenty pounds". [14]

"It was only then, and in a voice of shame, that Petrus asked me to try and get the money back... I tried to get the money; Lerice tried. We both telephoned and wrote and argued,

but nothing came of it. It appeared that the main expense had been the undertaker, and after all he had done his job. So, the whole thing was a complete waste, even more of a waste for the poor devils than I had thought it would be” [20]

To continue talking about themes in *Once Upon a Time* and *Six Feet of the Country*, we can see mainly racism and discrimination, both stories are set in the apartheid era and segregation was one of the aspects we can see the most in literature. The employees of both texts are black, and they work as servants, gardeners, or farmers for the white families, with a very low salary that does not even allow them to live for a whole week. They are people who work in the white people’s houses just for their satisfaction and well-being, because at that time, the whites did not want that kind of jobs, since they wanted other jobs, which they thought were decent for white people.

The black people were used for cooking, cleaning, gardening or even working on the lands that whites owned and used blacks to do their work. In addition, working was the only way for black people to enter the homes of white people, since they could not enter just to have a coffee or talk to them, because it was totally prohibited.

Two clear examples of these are the following ones:

“Our relationship with the blacks is almost feudal. Wrong, I suppose, obsolete, but more comfortable all around. We have no burglar bars, no guns. Lerice’s farm boys have their wives and their piccanins living with them on the land. They brew their sour beer without the fear of police raids.” Nadine Gordimer, *Six Feet of the Country* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) 9.

“They had a housemaid who was absolutely trustworthy and an itinerant gardener who was highly recommended by the neighbours.” Nadine Gordimer, *Jump and other stories* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1991) 40.

In addition, to continue talking about segregation, we can read in both books that white and black people never coincide in the same place, they live a few miles apart from each other, and they cannot go to the same places. They could not go to the same beaches, restaurants, or sit together for a coffee. What is more, they could not get married, and

what the white minority wanted to achieve was to make life very difficult for black people, and without a doubt, they succeeded. As I have said previously, blacks had restrictions to enter many places.

Furthermore, identity is another theme we can clearly see in both texts. On the one hand, in *Six Feet of the Country*, the black worker feels caught between two worlds, as he works for a white employer, but he is connected to his community and family, from those who he was really far away.

On the other hand, in the story of *Once Upon a Time*, the white family feels increasingly alienated from their white community and begin to lose their sense of identity, since they begin to place security barriers, an alarm system, armored windows, and posters in the door, due to the fear they felt that black people would enter the house to steal their belongings, or even kill them.

We can also see irony and hypocrisy, for example, in the text *Six Feet of the Country*, Nadine Gordimer reflects hypocrisy in an ironic tone, where discrimination was justified as part of the security of the country and the welfare of all, when in fact, it was used to maintain the power of the white minority against black people. An example of this could be: “He just kept on looking at me, out of his knowledge that white men have everything, can do anything; if they don’t, it is because they won’t” Nadine Gordimer, *Six Feet of the Country* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) 13.

Another example to see the power of the white minority could be: “It was merely a matter of getting such a man to lie low on our farm until a job could be found with someone who would be glad to take the risk of prosecution of employing an illegal immigrant in exchange for the services of someone as yet untainted by the city” Nadine Gordimer, *Six Feet of the Country* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) 11.

In addition, in the text *Once Upon a Time*, Gordimer also uses irony to make social criticisms, such as the hypocrisy of building barriers to protect them against the violence of the black people, when, in fact, the danger is inside the house, as the parents try to protect the child from the riots of black people, when in fact, by putting up the barriers,

they put the child at risk, since he wanted to climb the fences to play and simulate a scene from the movie “Sleeping Beauty”, but unfortunately, he died.

As we can see in this example, “the little boy pretended to be the Prince who braves the terrible thicket of thorns to enter the palace and kiss the Sleeping Beauty back to life: he dragged a ladder to the wall, the shining coiled tunnel was just wide enough for his little body to creep in, and with the first fixing of its razor-teeth in his knees and hands and head he screamed and struggled deeper into its tangle.” Nadine Gordimer, *Jump and other stories* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1991) 45.

Moreover, *Once Upon a Time* reflects the paranoia and fear of the white family in the post-apartheid era in South Africa, such as the building of barriers and walls to prevent violence and robbery of black people. On the other hand, we can also see the vulnerability and innocence of the little boy, as we can see how despite all the security measures the family uses to protect themselves from the robberies and violence in the suburb, at the end of the story the little boy dies on the electronic fences.

We can see an example of the previous comment here: “He had electronically controlled gates fitted. Anyone who pulled off the sign YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED and tried to open the gates would have to announce his intentions by pressing a button and speaking into a receiver relayed to the house” Nadine Gordimer, *Jump and other stories* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1991) 41.

What is more, in *Six Feet of the Country*, we can see the separation of families, where black workers have to separate from their families, from their customs, traditions, and from their country in order to work and earn money in some way. They are poor and immigrants who believe that by leaving their country and going to South Africa they are going to have a better life. In fact, they are going to a worse place where they have no rights and no freedom of expression, and they will work for white families as cooks, cleaners, or gardeners.

“Rhodesian natives are barred from entering the Union unless they have a permit; the young man was an illegal immigrant. No doubt our boys had managed the whole thing successfully several times before; a number of relatives must have walked the seven or

eight hundred miles from poverty to the paradise of zoot suits, police raids and black slum townships that is their *Egoli*, City of Gold – the African name for Johannesburg” Nadine Gordimer, *Six Feet of the Country* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) 11.

During apartheid, white people were better off than black people, they could go everywhere they wanted, travel in public transport, work in jobs with a salary that gave them access to everything they wanted and dreamed of. They also had no restrictions of any kind, and they had the human rights that they were entitled to.

However, black people lived with many restrictions, they did not have the right to go to the same places as white people and they had restricted places exclusively for them. They could not eat in the same place as white people, nor could live with them. The only way for black men and women to be with whites was by working for them, being cooks, cleaners, and even gardeners.

In *Once Upon a Time*, the only black people who have a place in the story are the cook and the gardener, who have no voice, but we know they are workers for the satisfaction of white families. In the book *Six Feet of the Country*, the black people in the story also work for the white family, cooking, cleaning, and even working for the lands of the white family.

“The trusted housemaid and the itinerant gardener, whose “day” it was, came running, the first to see and to scream with him, and the itinerant gardener tore his hands trying to get at the little boy.” Nadine Gordimer, *Jump and other stories* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1991) 45.

“Albert”, “Franz”, “Petrus”, “Dora the cook’s”, “Jacob the gardener’s” Nadine Gordimer, *Six Feet of the Country* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) 10 – 15.

6. Conclusions

The topics that I have exposed in my Final Degree Project, both Apartheid and British colonialism, are topics that I had the great opportunity to learn and study during my four years of degree at the University of La Laguna.

In addition, in the six months that I was on ERASMUS in the Czech Republic, I had a subject called “Literature”, where I had the opportunity to read several texts by the writer I have chosen for my work, who is Nadine Gordimer. What is more, I was able to learn about British colonialism and the segregation that South Africa experienced during those years.

Apartheid was one of the worst moments in South African history. The segregation between white and black people had a very negative impact on the country, where the white minority, especially the Dutch and British colonies, had control and power over it, since they believed that white and black people had to live their lives differently, and thus, in this way, help the country to develop properly and in a better way.

This movement based its policies on taking away all human rights from black people. They did not have the right to vote, they earned less money in their jobs than white people, that had the right to an education, but in very poor centers and without resources to be able to teach children in an adequate and dignified manner.

In addition, white and black people lived in different neighborhoods, quite far from each other, and they could not go together to restaurants, to the same beaches, get on the same public transports, sit together on a bench, or even black people could not enter to the white people’s houses, even if they invited black people, because it was forbidden.

Black people could only enter the white families’ houses to work, they used to be in charge of cooking, cleaning the house, or gardening. They did all this for the satisfaction of the white people, and so that they lived better, and they did not have to do anything, since, as I said before, white people did not want to work doing housework. In addition, black people did not work for whites because they wanted to, they did it because they had

nothing else to do, they had no right to a decent job or to work in what they wanted, and they all needed money to support them and their families.

From my point of view, it is a topic that has always caught my attention and I would like to continue to inform myself and continue learning about life and the hardships that black people had to go through because of a segregation that, honestly, should never have existed.

I would like to read and find out about books, texts, articles, or interviews by black people who lived through the hardships that I mentioned before, since it is not the same to read the texts of white people, like Nadine Gordimer, than to read them from black people, who they are written by firsthand.

In my opinion, Nadine Gordimer defended black people and fought as one of them for the rights that all humans in the world should have, such as being free and without difficulties at work, in education, and in their life.

Despite this, I have to admit that she is still a white woman, in addition to having British descent on her father's side, so no matter how much she defends black people and fights for their rights. We are reading the texts of a white woman who lived on the side of power and the lucky people in apartheid times, who had all the rights that a human person deserves, who could go wherever she wanted, could eat in any restaurant, rest on any beach, and walk through the towns of the country without fear that the white authorities would do something to her. Because of this, I believe it is essential to read texts from black people who lived apartheid from the side of the segregated people, who suffered for many years and lived a life they did not deserve.

Talking about how the segregation situation between black and white people is nowadays, the situation has improved a lot. Black people have the right to vote, they can go to the same beaches as white people, to restaurants, and to all the places they want to go. In addition, they can live in the same home with white people, they can take a walk together, eat together in any restaurant, and even live a normal life, which all humans in the world deserve.

Unfortunately, in some countries of the world there is still injustice between black and white people. In many countries there is a big difference between the rights that white and black people can obtain.

In the United States, for example, we have recently seen the authorities begin to kill black people, who are immigrants and innocent, who have not broken the law. As we can see in the magazine *Amnistía Internacional*, “Estas violaciones de derechos humanos, junto con las expulsiones masivas en aplicación del Título 42, son el capítulo más reciente de una larga historia de detenciones, exclusión y la práctica de intentar disuadir a las personas haitianas que buscan seguridad en Estados Unidos, enraizada en la discriminación sistemática de las personas Negras”³

What is more, we can see another clear example for this: “Los malos tratos que sufrieron las personas haitianas en los centros de detención estadounidenses – entre otros, la falta de acceso a alimentos suficientes, atención sanitaria, información, intérpretes y asistencia jurídica – tuvo un impacto acumulativo en las personas entrevistadas para este informe, pues ya habían sufrido diversas violaciones de derechos humanos, incluido el racismo hacia las personas Negras, durante su viaje a Estados Unidos”⁴

³ My translation: “These human rights violations, along with the Title 42 mass evictions, are the latest chapter in a long history of detentions, exclusion, and the practice of trying to deter Haitians seeking safety in the United States, rooted in the systematic discrimination against Black people.” Guevara Rosas, Erika, y Phillips, Nicole. 2022. “Estados Unidos: La tortura y otros malos tratos a personas haitianas solicitantes de asilo están enraizados en el racismo hacia las personas Negras”. *Amnistía Internacional*. Acceso el 11 de julio de 2023. <https://www.amnesty.org/es/latest/news/2022/09/usa-torture-haitian-asylum-seekers-anti-black-racism/> (22-09-2022)

⁴ My translation: “The mistreatment that Haitians suffered in US detention centers – including lack of access to sufficient food, health care, information, interpreters, and legal assistance – had a cumulative impact on the people interviewed for this report, as they had already experienced various human rights violations, including racism towards Black people, during their trip to the United States.” Guevara Rosas, Erika, y Phillips, Nicole. 2022. “Estados Unidos: La tortura y otros malos tratos a personas haitianas solicitantes de asilo están enraizados en el racismo hacia las personas Negras”. *Amnistía Internacional*. Acceso el 11 de julio de 2023. <https://www.amnesty.org/es/latest/news/2022/09/usa-torture-haitian-asylum-seekers-anti-black-racism/> (22-09-2022)

Leaving aside the segregation between black and white people, I am going to talk about the situation of women in Qatar nowadays. As Nadine Gordimer explained in the book *Telling Times*, women hid from the authorities because they had even fewer rights than men and they were barely allowed to leave their homes. Something similar is happening in Qatar, where women are the minority of the population, and they need permission from men to do most things.

As we can see in the newspaper called *El Confidencial*, “En un estado de 2,9 millones de habitantes de los que solo el 25% son mujeres, muchas de ellas siguen viviendo a la sombra de los hombres, de los que necesitan permisos y tutelas en varias etapas de su vida ... pero las cadenas invisibles que las atan las obligan a tener que pedir permisos a su tutor para salir del país, casarse o trabajar en algunos puestos ... y la violencia de género no está tipificada en el código penal.”⁵

Another example of this could be: “Las mujeres en el país están discriminadas en la ley en la práctica, a pesar de que los gobernantes qataríes repitan que en su país rige la igualdad entre hombres y mujeres y hayan declarado su compromiso con la igualdad de género ... el desequilibrio en las leyes, sin embargo, existe tanto en la esfera familiar, como en la de los tribunales, donde el testimonio de ellos tiene más peso que el de ellas.”⁶

⁵ My translation: “In a state of 2.9 million inhabitants of which only 25% are women, many of them continue to live in the shadow of men, who need permits and guardianship at various stages of their lives ... but the invisible chains that bind them force them to have to ask their guardian for permission to leave the country, get married or work in some jobs ... and gender violence is not typified in the penal code”. P. B. 2022. “¿Qué derechos tienen las mujeres en Qatar? Necesitan permisos y tutores para (casi) todo”, El Confidencial. Acceso el 11 de julio de 2023. https://www.elconfidencial.com/mundo/2022-11-10/derechos-mujeres-qatar-alcohol-divorcio-mundial_3517318/ (15-11-2022)

⁶ My translation: “Women in the country are discriminated against by law in practice, despite the fact that the Qatari rulers repeat that equality between men and women governs in their country and have declared their commitment to gender equality ... the imbalance in the laws, however, exists both in the family sphere and in the courts, where the men testimony has more weight than women ones”. P. B. 2022. “¿Qué derechos tienen las mujeres en Qatar? Necesitan permisos y tutores para (casi) todo”, El Confidencial. Acceso el 11 de julio de 2023. https://www.elconfidencial.com/mundo/2022-11-10/derechos-mujeres-qatar-alcohol-divorcio-mundial_3517318/ (15-11-2022)

To finish with my conclusions, from my point of view, I want these inequalities between black and white people, and between men and women, to end as soon as possible and that all countries in the world have an equal law regardless of gender, race, or skin color. All people are equal and being in the 21st century, these injustices should not still exist. Many countries need a change in their laws, in their way of life and in their way of understanding things, and we are very lucky to live in a country that does not look down on anyone and that we all have the same rights.

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