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Recovery from Feminine Trauma through Fauziya Kassindja's Autobiography, *Do they Hear You When You Cry*: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract- This paper is intended to explore Fauziya Kassindja's autobiography, Do They Hear You When you Cry (1998), Kassindja's psyche, who was subjected to a sequence of traumas in her adolescent life, death of her father, escaping Female genital Mutilation, and imprisoned for being illegal immigrant as she was an asylum seeker. This work attests the positive effects of the trauma in changing her life forever, changing from innocent to experience. It concentrates on revealing the result of human growth after trauma upon Stephen Joseph and P. Alex Linley theoretical perception of posttraumatic stress and the organismic valuing theory as exposed in Trauma,Recovery and Growth: Positive Psychological Perspectives on Posttraumatic Stress (2008). Kassindja writes her autobiography as part of cognitive-behavioral therapy after adversity, as she discloses her detailed emotions of every experience she went through from her traumatic memory. I conclude that Kaassindja used writing her autobiography as a kind of self-therapy that her consciousness exercised to overcome her experience. Therefore, she lives her life to the better not to the worst.

Keywords: *stephen joseph, p. alex linley, posttraumatic growth, PTG, FGM, trauma, women, autobiography, writing.*

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I. Introduction

Humans sometimes are exposed to events that consider beyond their ability to control and they became as traumatic. These events are received with a strong negative response from individuals and cause them to shift their mental perception. Through the old centuries, especially the Victorian, mental illnesses such as insanity was questioned and observed as a matter of problem in faith and religion. Originally, *trauma* is derived from the Greek, meaning to wound or pierce. (Velsen, 1997, p.61). Ultimately, traumatic experiences include three elements which are necessary for an experience to be traumatizing: "suddenness, lack of controllability, and an extremely negative valence". (Carlson & Dalenberg, 2000, p.5).

In addition to that, Stephen Joseph & P. Alex Linley (2008, p.3) argued that the "exposure to stressful and traumatic events can have severe and chronic psychological consequences". They are highly and universally expressed as destructive and damaging to the psyche, for example an "actual death or serious injury or threat to the physical integrity of self or others" with the individual's response of "intense fear, helplessness and horror" (Joseph & Linley, 2008, p.3). These experiences have to perceive a physical or severe emotional pain.

Profoundly, individual's emotional experiences involve a feeling of not being able to protect one's self-image and lose one's adaption of life. The failure to resist these experiences may influence one's beliefs and lead them to shatter partially or completely. Trauma can be caused either if a person experiences an extreme stressor or to a person who observes others who are apparently experiencing it. The aftermath of traumatic experiences may develop a serious mental disturbance, as sometimes individuals are victims of melancholy, depression, instability or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Victims can experience a psychological dissociation causing them to lose the ability to incorporate either cognitively or emotionally.

However, this autobiography has been selected for the study due to it draws attention to the possibility of how a person can be psychologically evolved in adolescent age regardless the crucial life events she went through. So, The present paper contributes to the critical studies of women's trauma through analyzing their autobiographies and studying the positive psychological effect that change women's personality. Kassindja is a profound example of how writing can be considered to be a prominence part of recovery.

II. Literature Review

Kassindja's autobiography was not studied by much scholarly research, but some articles investigated it. Frydman, K & Seelinger, L (2008) discussed the development of decisions that involve female genital cutting (FGC) and referring to Fauziya Kassindja. The paper entitled with *Kasinga's Protection Undermined? Recent Developments in Female Genital Cutting Jurisprudence*. They explained that the board of immigration appeals had come with more decisions involved (FGC). Firstly, in case of women who had already undergo (FGC) their asylum would be denied because they would not undergo the procedure again so there is no fear left. Secondly, a parent who is eligible for withholding of removal for fear to his/her daughters' safety from (FGC) is denied and the claim is to be found "derivative" and the parents own lives are not threatened

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upon the removal. Frydman & Seelinger offered thoughts about the previous decisions to how the experts can advocate it.

Moreover, Dugger. W (1996) article in *The New York Times* entitled with *U.S. Grants Asylum to Woman Fleeing Genital Mutilation Rite*. The article reveals Fauziya Kassindja's case. She struggled as she fled and landed at Newark International Airport and asked for asylum. She was stripped, searched and put into prison as an illegal immigrant. She was detained in Esmor detention center in Elizabeth, N.J. It was run by a private company under contract with the immigration service. After a condition of disturbance in Esmor, Kassindja was held in Pennsylvania prisons. The immigration law called for asylum to be granted to people who have fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality and political opinions in a social group. (FGM) is practiced in millions of women in 26 African countries. As a result of 197 immigration judges across the U.S countries, she granted asylum and lived in Washington area.

Rysavy, T. (1998) reviewed Kassindja's book: *Do They Hear You When You Cry.* She described it as if it is an eye opener of many accounts. It shaded the lights on women who, for culture circumstances, cannot talk to strangers about FGM or rape or forced impregnation. Most of the girls in Africa are not like Kassindja. They are illiterate and struggle with poverty. So, they would not choose to leave to the unknown. The book revealed the impersonal and inhuman treatment of the asylum seekers experience in the US. Kassindja mentioned, according to Rysavy, that the majority of immigrants are black. As if the study corroborated in Kassindja own prison experience. Rysavy added that the book will make the readers rethink the US refugee and the economic systems.

Most of what has been written about Kassindja is relating her story, fundamentally, to the immigration law. It is also about publicity and discussing how her case interpreted in the law court. Though she published her autobiography, it was not studied under a critical analysis. This present research discusses her autobiography as part of literary context and analyzing it through psychological theories.

III. Methodology

The methodology of this study profoundly focuses on analyzing Fauziya Kassindja's *Do They Hear You When You Cry* through applying a psychological theory of Stephen Joseph and P. Alex Linley.

Traumatic events are mostly affecting wellbeing devastatingly. It, as explained in the previous chapter, lead to severe and chronic psychological consequences. However, human nature is meant to grow and develop through suffering and stressful events. In other words, the outcomes of trauma can result of negative and positive reactions. The life changing event cause a psychological shift in thinking and how to observe the world. Historically, positive psychology was launched by Martin E. P. Seligman, in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, who was the president of the American Psychological Association. He discussed that since World War II psychology focused on the medical treatment of psychological ailments rather than its "mission to make the lives of all people more productive and fulfilling, and to understand and nurture high talent" (Joseph & Linley, 2008, p.4). Thus the prominence of cure and medical treatment, psychology became fundamentally a medical oriented discipline. Genuinely, psychology included the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), as its relation with (PTSD) which diagnosed in the Vietnam and War World II veterans.

Psychology was basically a work to relieve the suffering and psychological complications. Through a long history of clinical psychology, which attached with the psychiatric hospitals, the practice of psychology has been diagnosed according to the methods of scientific science. To elaborate more, the ideology of mental illness, such as (PTSD), was more related to medicine and psychoanalysis. shortly, After World War II, psychologists were more interested in involving biological models into psychoanalysis. As some illnesses were proved to be treated through the biological model. Some illnesses as (PTSD) might be entirely inappropriate to be treated with biological model.

The U. S. establishment of the Veterans Administration (VA) in (1946) and the financial support of the U. S. National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) for research and practice made it more acceptable to the diagnosis of mental illness to be practiced into science, biology and clinical psychology rather than rejecting it. According to Joseph & Linley (2008) "to reject the medical models and its attendant illness ideology would have been anathema to many clinical psychologists of this period" (2008, p.4). As a consequence of involving medical models to psychological problems, as Joseph & Linley use (Albee,2000) words, became the "fatal flaw" of science that "has distorted and damaged the development of clinical psychology ever since" (Joseph & Linley, 2008, p.5). To put it differently, the medical model changed the language and the concepts of clinical psychology to the language of medicine and psychopathology. It narrowed psychologists view to "what is weak and deficient rather than to what is strong and healthy" (ibid). It emphasized on negative psychology and observe what may be a part of post traumatic *growth* as a posttraumatic *stress disorder.*

Moreover, clinical psychology focused on alleviating mental illness rather than facilitating it. The medical model is concerned with the reactions after

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trauma as (PTSD) and not concerning it as a normal reaction of cognitive emotional processing that follow trauma. psychological illnesses are more of conditions inside the individual (the illness analogy) and its interaction with social environment and psychological integration. Additionally, psychopathology is different only in degree not in kind. Mental problems are related to the physical human dis functioning which made posttraumatic reactions not normal. So, it categorized with different theories rather than posttraumatic growth, which relies on psychological theories. It is the dimensional model that differ normality and abnormality, wellness and illness, and effective and ineffective psychosocial functioning which is related with the continuum of human functioning.

Furthermore, the treatment of clinical psychology is based on identifying disorder in the patient and prescribe a medical treatment as a cure for a disease (mental illness). These interventions, treatments, are similarly successful attempt on the part of friend, family, teachers and ministers. Many people, who did not seek any professional intervention, guarantee that social support is sufficient after traumatic events. In fact, Joseph & Linley ensure that people after traumatic events have the tendency to also report positive changes, not only negative. Ultimately, the positive perspective of psychology is somehow contrasted with psychopathology, clinical problems. Post traumatic growth is a term coined by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995). It is developing as an integrative perspective to understand both the stresses and growth of human experience in the same framework of human experience. That's to say, it is hard to understand recovery from posttraumatic stress without knowing that for some people this includes positive changes beyond their earlier levels of functioning and well-being. In addition to that, it is not possible to completely comprehend growth following adversity without the awareness of the traumatic distress that evoke such change and posttraumatic stress and posttraumatic growth, as Joseph & Linley put it that "They are not separate ends of a continuum, nor indeed separate, unrelated phenomena, but rather two aspects of human experience…. Associated with each other in a variety of ways". (2008, p.341). PTSD and Posttraumatic growth are corresponding with each other.

Many literary works and philosophies emphasized on the idea that human growth is to be found in suffering and it is central to the existential-humanistic tradition of psychology. This theme was highly embraced in the classic work of literature such as: Dante Alighieri and Fyodor Dostoevsky and the continental existential philosophy tradition such as; Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Explicitly, religions in the east and west such as Buddhism, Christianity and in context of the research, Islam, stress on the value that can be found in suffering.

In details, Joseph and Linley (2008) explain that traumatic events provide basic cognitions, a conscious and nonconscious representations of the traumatic events. These representations provide appraisal processes, cognitive process and emotional process. The cognitive process is controlled by consciousness and the automatic process indicates the need for cognitive emotional processing. These appraisal processes can occur in association with distressing emotional states, such as, fear, anger, guilt or with positive emotional states, hope, joy and gratitude. This happens as humans attempt to manage their emotional state and to make their experience more sensible. Individual processes may also occur in a social context that effect event cognitions while coping. Therefore, as Joseph and Linley puts it: "input from others can interact through appraisal processes to influence the individual's meaning attributions, emotional states, memory structures, and coping in a helpful or harmful manner" (Joseph and Linley, 2008, p.10). Hence, the support of close ones or professional support is required due to the individual need to remember and talk about trauma to cope with life after adversity.

Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) reflects on the individual's personality, as a positive reconfiguration of schema. It can be recognized in personality as part of adjustment after adversity. Again, the focus of (PTG) is more about the fundamental positive changes and people's assumptive world rather than the subjective psychological experiencing of avoidance and hyper arousal, posttraumatic stress reactions. The focus is more related with the existential mastery, personal growth, autonomy, positive relationship with others and having a purpose in life. A change in the perception of the world and in life philosophy. Hence, individuals reach a level of self-development.

a) Organismic Valuing Theory

Joseph and Linley highlight a more theoretical model called the organismic valuing model. It indicates that individuals may intrinsically move toward growth. Similarly, it identifies the different direction, assimilating or accommodating, in which the cognitive emotional process can proceed while the individuals move through the cycle of appraisal, emotional states and coping. The information of the trauma event either assimilated with the existing models. This means that the devastating trauma information affects the individual world beliefs. So, to assimilate the experience and maintain world beliefs, it requires a complex cognitive strategy. To clarify, self-blame considers as a strategy individual may blame him\herself. Therefore, individual belief of the life's misfortune is fair for those who deserve it. On the other hand, accommodating means that the existing models.

Significantly, the negative or positive value that proceed through the cognitive accommodation processes changes one's perception of the world. It can

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be in a negative direction such as depressogenic reaction of hopelessness and helplessness. It can be also in a positive direction such as life is to be lived to the full in the present time and place. However, cognitive accommodation can lead to negative perception towards the world and result a psychopathology, or positive perception of the world so one's reach self-development and growth.

The Organismic Valuing Model underlined three cognitive outcomes that are related to trauma difficulties. Initially, those who assimilate their experiences and return to their previous beliefs, pretrauma personality and perception of the world, are more likely to be "vulnerable to future retraumatiztion" (2008, p.14). They continue with their "pre-event assumptions despite the evidence to the contrary and would be expect to develop more rigid defenses" (ibid). They would develop psychological problems such as (PTSD). Then, those who accommodate in a negative direction are more likely to psychopathology problems, such as borderline personality problems, depression and helplessness. Lastly, such experience in which accommodated in a positive direction lead to growth: "living in the moment, valuing relationships, and appreciating life" (ibid).

Though the directions of processing are useful, the self-structure is complex and multifaceted. Some of the processes which experienced in one of the directions can be accommodated in positive and negative ways and others can be assimilated. Therefore, it cannot be said that there is an endpoint to either processes. To illustrate, Individual's emotional experience of self –blame "maintains that facet of self-structure concerned with the perception of the world as just" (Joseph and Linley, 2008, p.15). Though individual assimilated trauma-related information to sustain just-world beliefs, such processes, like self-blame, act as "implications for other facets of self-structure that must accommodate the new information about the self that arises as a result of this appraisal" (ibid). Therefore, to fully understand the processes, the self-structure has to be conceptualized as multifaceted.

The social environment can influence people to either assimilate or accommodate their traumatic experiences. However, these processes are developmental and continuous through life. The organismic valuing theory propose that people are inherently motivated towards growth and it's a universal tendency, but the social environment may, according to Joseph & Linley "restrict, impede, or distort this intrinsic motivation" (2008, p.15). The clinical consideration focuses on the psychosocial frame work which emphasizes the importance of the social support, social context and social capital in influencing how people move toward the cycle of appraisals and emotional states. This persona-centered psychology fundamentally adopted from Joseph & Linley refer to Rogers (1959) social perspective who emphasizes on the importance of "nonjudgmental, empathic, and genuine relationships" and to use either nondirective relationship based therapeutic approaches or directive approaches in the process to facilitate growth. (Joseph & Linley, 2008, p.16). However, it must be mentioned that it is possible for some treatments of posttraumatic stress to be helpful to the facilitation of posttraumatic growth.

Due to leaving countries to other ones and several losses of familiarity with physical and culture environment, economic, social status, language and identity people may suffer through stressful and traumatic events. These traumatic events are affected by the pretrauma assumption about the self and the world. The emotional-cognitive processes include automatic and deliberate rumination. It means that, the processes toward growth may involve writing and talking about trauma-related content. The psychoanalysis Laub (1992) calls this process a "therapeutic process". A process of "constructing a narrative, of reconstructing history and essentially re-*externalizating* the event" to elucidate and transmit the story. (Laub, 1992, p.69).

The distal (macro) and the proximate (micro/ mezzo) sociocultural aspects provide the context for individual rumination about the traumatic experiences and the development of posttraumatic growth. The micro aspects are more related to the predominant values, themes, narratives and ways of observing the world. The micro/mezzo aspects refer to the family, friends, religious congregations that the individual interact with as part of the surrounding community. Hence, the social environment is more likely to affect the individual rumination and thinking processes.

The immigration experience presents a serious threat to cognitive and emotional integrity. For illegal immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers it considers to be a threat to life. Physical integrity may also present because of people forced to flee their home countries and face difficulties in the country they immigrate to. Though traumatic event may present as a distinct event such as an earthquake or a car accident, immigrants endure for a multiphased prolonged period. The three faces are departure, transit, and resettlement. In departure phase, it is more related with separation from people, places and possessions. This evokes fears of the unknown, emotional conflicts, and familial conflict. In addition, transit phase is when the relocation happens, as the logistics complications, danger of border for illegal immigrants, and prolonged periods in camps and prisons. Finally, the stressors in the resettlement phase can be related to the new rules and customs with the issue of reinvent the self in the new environment. A deep sense of loss comes through these faces and it may last for years though it may also subsided slowly.

The study of posttraumatic growth has been identified in survivors of war, accidents, medical

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conditions, child sexual abuse, rape and natural and technological disasters. However, few studies explored posttraumatic growth in immigrants. Joseph & Linley propose a study by Powell et al. (2003) examines refugees who cross international borders or those how relocated within their own country during the war in Bosnia. The study states a low level of posttraumatic growth. The studies which they refer to found that posttraumatic growth in immigrants is related to participation in counseling and to a degree of the importance of religion in the individual's life. The therapy strategies that posttraumatic growth which are conducted are more related to the cognitive-behavioral therapy. The treatment should address information of the traumatic event, the challenges, cognitive processing and social context and put into consideration the pretrauma qualities of the individual.

As a matter of fact, immigrants need to fully give recognition to their losses and valid their pain to give themselves the permission to mourn. This in general requires them to consider the proximate and natural social environments that provide such chances. Besides, to develop posttraumatic growth individuals need to "engage in constructive rumination rather than in the "brooding" type… constantly revisiting the traumatic events in detail" (Joseph & Linley, 2008, p.99). This can occur through redefining essential concepts such as the past successful techniques to cope with the traumatic events. And according to Gavranidou and Rosner (2003) women are more likely to use emotion focused rumination style than men, this comes in appropriation of the research context. As an illustration, constructive rumination may include engaging with family rituals, storytelling about the immigration experience, creative writing, nonverbal techniques, community theater and more additional expressive strategies.

As previously noticed, posttraumatic growth can be a lengthy process specially for immigrants as refuges and asylum seekers. It may occur in the context of other stressors while the individual adjusts with the new environment. This may cause to delay the cognitive engagement of the losses then postpone the posttraumatic growth process. It must be mentioned that individual is more likely to develop growth if she/he engaged with others who experienced somehow a parallel trauma and perceived positive effects.

In the research context, these theories will be utilized to deconstruct the victim psyche, Kassindja, after experiencing trauma. Through the coming chapters both theories will analyze the positive and the negative perspectives of trauma. Herman's theory of trauma will be used to analyze the negative consequences of trauma, PTSD. Whereas, Joseph and Linley theories will utilize the positive perspective of trauma, growth and recovery.

IV. Discussions and Analysis

Kassindja's life changing events cause her to psychological shift in thinking and how to observe the world. Through experiences such as kassindja's, there is not only a possible negative effect of trauma following adversity, but also a possibility of growth which both associated side by side. I believe that Kassindja wrote her autobiography as an autobiographical memory, a subjective perspective on particular events that she experienced which linked together on a personal timeline. She wanted to incorporate more of her emotions, to describe herself and as a form of navigation to her consciousness toward growth.

Human psychology is meant to be affected in the process of trauma, there is a possibility for a post psychological shift. Through the story of Kassindja there is an endless process of searching to fulfill the understanding of trauma and she, at the end of her book, focuses in its positive consequences. Joseph & Linley processes Post Traumatic Growth as its associated with Post Traumatic Stress. Profoundly, the scholars emphasize that people after the traumatic experiences end, they have the tendency to report positive changes, not only negative.

Kassindija's stressful experience does not give her a tremendous effect on her personality. Through deep analyses of the book, she shows some positive psychological perspective after trauma. She embraces her journey as she has no enough knowledge of how the world is. She elaborates her story with a conscious reasoning of what has happened to her.

Posttraumatic growth is illustrated in a different point in Kassindja experience. Originally, her positive changes are mainly in how her story is the reason which makes Female Gentile Mutilation, a gender –specific harm, to be as a violation of human rights. In fact, she comes to comprehend that after she grants freedom. She writes "I didn't know they could be thought of as a human rights violation… but my case happened to come along at exactly the right time, when it could be a symbol for what was happening to a lot of other women." (503). Hence, as she knows her story is a part of changing law, as in Joseph & Linley words, "the experience of posttraumatic growth is more concerned with fundamental positive changes." (Joseph & Linley, 2008, p.11). Her perception of her experience is changed. She is more likely to focus on the positive consequences rather only the negative.

Moreover, the change happens because of trauma can lead to a physiological evolve rather than emotional distraction. As Joseph & Linley write "psychological well-being is about engagement with the existential challenges of life. It comprises dimensions of self-acceptance, environmental mastery, personal growth…positive relations with others, and having a purpose of life." (Joseph & Linley, 2008, p.11). After

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Kassindja grants asylum, she is not to be isolated or depressed. She, somehow, focuses more in completing her life in America as she tries to adjust. She writes:

> on the very day I was granted asylum, as it turned out-Jessica came down to Washington from New York to take me around to visit different schools and meet with an education consultant who would help me figure out where I should study. I couldn't wait to go back to school. (500)

She later adds "I've thought a lot about where I should go when I finish ––what I shout study, what I want to be right now I think I want to become a nurse. But I might change my mind later." (501). She is to draw and map her future and look forward to establish her new life in a totally different culture than hers. It is as a part of understanding how to adapt her free choices to move on with her life as she always wanted. Besides, her purpose in life is to be dedicated to help women who struggled as she did and disclose what's always been hidden and unbearable. That means, she starts to write the book to raise people's awareness of the unjust that women all over the world suffer from, as she writes "I decided to write this book is because the American people need to know about what happened to me right here in America." (504). This comes as a result of Kassindja understanding of her role and significance in the world. Weine (2006) explain it as "survivors are expressing hope that articulating their terrifying and dismal experiences can yield some new meanings, understandings, obligations, or relationships that will be beneficial" (2006, p.145). Her mission is to pursue justice for other women by giving more attention to the practice of FGM. She writes:

> I am told that the American embassy in Togo has now decided to put more money toward helping to educate against this practice…I also Heard that my tribe was going to hold a big meeting to discuss whether they should continue this practice. (503).

Profoundly, the organismic value theory highlights that the inescapable trauma in human lives can serve as "trigger existing normative developmental trajectories." (Joseph & Linley, 2008, p.343). The outcomes of her experience changed her personality from innocent 18 teenager to strong adolescent who overcome a traumatizing experience. Her personality developed from a girl who saw the world as beautiful and caring to a life which is full with challenges. Herman describes one of one of her patients during recovery as "She has a clear sense of what is important and what is not… Having encountered the fear of death, she knows how to celebrate life" (1992a, p.213). Victims in recovery stages are somehow meant to find their purposes in life after they gather the pieces of their trauma in a sensible method. Due to the emotional support she is surrounded with, Kassindja is more likely to have a strong motivated personality though the culture differences and its contradictions.

Immigrants who forced themselves to leave their countries, they are more likely to have a serious threat to cognitive and emotional stress or more, threat of life. Tzipi Weiss & Roni Berger (2008) ideas on relating growth to immigration in three phases. Kassindja suffers for more than a year and a half till she grants asylum in the United States. In the departure phase, she travels away from Togo, her family and loved ones. Ultimately, Kassindja takes specific items such as her father's watch, the necklace and earing that her grandmother gave them to her. She writes "I could not leave these things. I grabbed them and stuffed them into the folds of my head wrap too." (118). Moreover, in the transit phase, where the relocation happens. Unfortunately, she is to be imprisoned and treated with abusive behavior and goes through physical illness that makes her suffering in the exile beyond worse. She writes "The smoke… was making me ill. I was coughing, wheezing, feeling dizzy and nauseous. My asthma was getting worse and worse." (284). Finally, the last phase which become the final phase in her traumatic experience. After she grants asylum she writes "America that I longed to live in was not just a dream." (513). For a long time, Fauziya lived in hatred for America because of the injustice that she is treated with, but later she realizes that it's the systems to blame. Therefore, she changes her view of the exile culture and people and starts to observe it as the country she always longed for. Certainly, deliberate rumination, as involving writing and talking about the trauma, is a way that victims used to move forward in life. It is a way of the cognitive engagement to adjust with the traumatizing event. Henceforth, Kassindja gives a voice to her feeling and thoughts as she expresses them by writing her story. She writes "while I was in prison. I started a journal to record some of the unbelievable things I went through. I though one day I might show this journal to my children or my grandchildren." (512). The American psychoanalyst Dori Laub confirms the treatment of telling the story as part of healing process and to build a new linkage to the present. He adds:

> Survivors who do not tell their story become victims of distorted memory . . . The events become more and more distorted in their silent retention and pervasively invade and contaminate the survivor's daily life. The longer the story remains untold, the more distorted it becomes in the survivor's conception of it, so much so that the survivor doubts the reality of the actual events. (Laub, 1995, p.64).

Unfortunately, studies, according to Joseph & Linley (2008) report a low level of post traumatic growth in immigrants. For Kassindja, it is highly stressful to suffer in a different environment, away from culture, language and identity. Thus, Kassindja is to have low level of growth especially after the release. That's come as consequence of not having her family in the United States and her loved ones refuse to hear her suffering

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even while talking to them on the phone. For instance, she writes:

> I speak to my family regularly, I've tried, often, to tell them some of what I went through during those sixteen months. They don't want to know. That's hurt me sometimes. I'll find myself bursting into tears out of blue, for no particular reason, but because I hurt inside.(498-499).

Though Kassindja is away from her family, the support she has from layli' Miller's family is incredibly accommodating. Also, the support and care she has from her lawyers and the people around her helps her to adjust with her new life in America. To move forward, Kassindja tries to form self-recovery techniques from trauma, such as a cognitive-behavioral therapy, the idea of *Accommodation*. It means, the victim who accommodate her experience is by accepting and appraising the new information of her trauma. that's to say, her preexisting beliefs are, somehow, different or less evolved than her beliefs after adversity. Either the accommodation is in the negative or positive changes. She do not only recognize the losses she has, she interacts with the surrounding to acknowledge the aftermath of trauma and engages a constructive rumination.

Truly, religion considers to be the continental existential philosophy tradition that stress on the value is to be found in suffering. Consequently, Kassindja tends to find answers for her spiritual question. She tries to find them as she is a Muslim, as what is the God's well in her sorrow. Joseph & Linley explain that in some immigrants "the importance of religion in one's life is related to some aspects of posttraumatic growth." (Joseph & Linley, 2008, p.99). However, in the beginning, she is to complain about her misfortune as the world's unjust. She writes:

> If this is what being one of God chosen is like, I'd have been a lot happier if God hadn't chosen me, if I hadn't had to go through all the suffering and the pain, all that loss….If the BIA decision make it even a little easier for other women who fleeing FGM to find asylum, I'll feel that there really was some purpose to what I went through.(502-503).

Though she is not content with what happened to her. Here, she still in the process of searching for answers. The process of growth is not fast rather it takes time till the survival of trauma find God's will in their suffering. This happens as part of postponing the emergence of posttraumatic growth. After she adjusts with her new life and still processing constructive rumination, she comes to realize her fortune. she writes:

> I thank God every day, five times a day for own good fortune. God has blessed me. He made me suffer but He also blessed me. I'm safe and free in America, surrounded by people who love me. Others are not so fortune. They are being held in prison, being denied asylum, and being sent back to terrible forms of suffering. (505).

Moreover, Kassindja become conscious that she is a public symbol and her story is happening to a lot of other women. She confront to the fact that FGM is not only happening in her country, but it is a worldwide problem. Finally, she contacts with others who have been with her in prison and shared the same experience she had. She writes: "there are my friends, I made while in prison… Aicha was granted asylum and is tending college in Philadelphia area. We see each other as much as possible." (505). In creating such contact, she develops more cognitive processing and emotional support that contributes to her posttraumatic growth. In this way, she is to have perceive more positive effects.

V. Conclusion

Kassindja's story is related to the positive psychological effect which was introduced in the light of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) and explained by recent theorists, Joseph and Linley. Based on the discussions, I conclude that though Kassindja explained her trauma with deep emotional and sensational expressions that was evoked due to a serious psychological distress, she revealed a huge development in her personality. However, from the first reading, it was not clear how she expressed her growth. The overwhelming emotions in the story are more related to the suffering she had. I found that, after revealing layers of her trauma, she had evolved and developed as a unique character. Indeed, the prominence reason for her writing is her psychological development. She was reflecting her trauma and the long asting emotions into words that eventually was part of growth. This means her personality was transcended from innocence to experience, as gradually she found her purpose in life and comprehend, with positive thinking, her fortune to be alive and free unlike others.

As Kassindja had to pursue refuge in America, her losses are more severe than trauma within the same culture. She had to confront with different resources of cultural environment, and losses of identity and community. Refuges from different back grounds are more likely to have, as Kirmayer (2007) explains, "specific difficulties in understanding and empathizing with their experience." (2007, p.7). Therefore, Kassindja had more potentials to be psychologically traumatized and experiences more complications than the ordinary individual within the same culture.

Eventually, I concluded that the kind of self-therapy that Kassindja's consciousness exercised to overcome her experience is referred to as one of the cognitive- behavioral therapy techniques. The dimensions of posttraumatic growth is more focused on changing the philosophy of life, the distress and hyper arousal of feelings is part of the challenges in life. She also focused on the spiritual aspect of accepting Gods well and its part of human essential survival. She engaged with the social environment to build more positive relationships and to establish more sensible

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thinking. This assisted through emerging the emotional and cognitive process toward positive direction. This also was obvious in the end of the book, as Kassindja thanks all those lawyers who helped her and later became her friends. I debate that Kassindja comes to a realize that, as what the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzche (1888) said (Trans. In Ridley & Norman, 2005), "What doesn't kill me makes me stronger." (2005, p.157).

Though the culture chock she is confronted with, she had emphasized on the significance of hers. Giving priority to describing her background is understood as her goal to stress on her pride of her identity though the false norms, which she was victimized because of them. Though more errors argued about her country, she refused to stay in the shades and decided to clear her status not as a woman who is embarrassed of her country, but as an African woman who is proud of her religion and culture. Henceforth, the study revealed that writing an autobiography, Kassindja's, as she established herself and identity in the exile, profoundly, entitled with improving her mental health. Moreover, her autobiography is to be considered as part of applying a psychological treatment to recover gradually from her turmoil experience. While remembering and writing, she did not describe the events and the struggle only, but she formed a strategy to reconstruct her self-engagement with the experience and therefore with her surroundings. While writing her autobiography, According to Binoy et al. (2017), the experiencer ensures the phenomenological continuity between the incident and the present self-images. This provides an interesting development to understand the link between reality, experience, and consciousness. In other words, Drožđek & Willson (2007) describe the idea of making sense of the trauma loses "can help individuals avoid the psychic scars that lead to… the tendency to see the world in polarized terms of black and white, and the righteous anger that undermines clear thinking." (2007, p. vii). Hence, this helped Kassindja to provide a comprehensible link between what happened, past events, and the meaningful direction she chose toward growth.

Kassindja used her autobiography as a self-testimony and a reflection of her strength and power to live not as a victim, but as a survivor. She wrote her story so people can know what kind of injustice has happened to her and, as Rose puts it, 'Speaking out is a political as well as a therapeutic act, and as such, is a claim to power . . . Trauma narratives . . . point to the unjustified violence done to people, and hold abusers rather than victims accountable' (Rose, 1999, p.174). The process of narrating her experience is formed in a sequence that it is not about the negative emotions and the dominate distress only, but it is more connected to the learned lessons from the past experiences, as she navigates her consciousness towards the right direction of recovery. It also ensures that Kassindja found her purpose in life which is related to the public awareness of women's suffering because of false culture norms.

In the end, through the analysis of Kassindja's autobiography, *Do They Hear You When You Cry,* the present research confirmed the applicability of joseph and Linely theory of growth and recovery. Therefore, Kassindja has over came her traumatic experience through writing her autobiography.

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