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Unveiling Racism in America's Multicultural Society: Reading Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*

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Boundaries are the limitations constructed due to political, geographical, physical or even psychological reasons. Many a times living within those restricted zones can be claustrophobic. But when given a choice or without choice accepting life beyond the boundaries can be exhilarating for some, and can be further suffocating for some at the same time. Julia Alvarez, is a Dominican-American writer, vividly portraying the struggles of the Latino community in America. But at the same time she embraces the hybridity to construct a new identity across boundaries she never imagined. Leaving one's homeland is a daunting experience, full of challenges and struggles beyond imagine. But how the author adopts a new culture and a new country gives hope to thousands of such immigrants struggling to find a place for themselves. The feelings of loss, alienation is constructively used and put to purpose through the act of writing. But the darker side also presents that not everything is rosy across boundaries, some get past the up-rootedness and develop new roots, some are still stuck in the memory of their homeland. This paper would examine Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, and bring out the negatives of moving across boundaries. The paper would also analyze racism towards immigrants prevalent in the American multicultural society. The paper would highlight negative and hidden flaws of the American Dream; racism and segregation along with the various boundaries overcome by the characters. Boundaries that would include, geographical displacement, mental boundaries, cultural boundaries etc. also fighting everyday degrading insults It would also focus on the effect of the created boundaries and crossing them on women especially from the Latino community

Keywords: Exile, Identity, Migration, Race, Racism, Ethnicity

"To deserve a people's love, you must know them. You must learn to appreciate their history, their culture, their values, their aspirations for human advancement and freedom."
- Jesus Colon From "How to Know the Puerto Ricans" (Rois 1)

Julia Alvarez, a Dominican American novelist has specifically focused her writings around the experiences of the Latino community residing in the US. Her own experience of being from outside the American community provides depth to her novels. Her early childhood was spent on the island with an

affluent extended family. But the political conditions of her country, forced the family to leave a life of comfort and move to America for a safer and a prosperous life. Through an alliance of some American friends her father was allowed to enter America on a fellowship to specialize in the medical field. Thus the Alvarez family was abruptly uprooted and Julia Alvarez entered a new country at the threshold of adolescence and also at the time when racism was at its peak. Her first novel, *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents* depict a story of the Garcia family similar to that of author's family. It is a kind of an autobiographical novel, narrated through the experiences of Carlos Garcia and Laura Garcia along with their four daughters, Carla, Sandra, Yolanda and Sofia. Yolanda can be called the alter ego of the author. The novel is narrated in a reverse chronological order, and vividly depicts the circumstances under which they flee from their island to the States. Carlos Garcia being involved in a failed coup against the dictator, Rafael Trujillo, is forced to choose voluntary exile from their nation for the safety of the family. The novel then focuses on the growing up of the four sisters, and how they desire to live the American dream, but the constant pressure from the family to live within certain cultural codes deprive them of creating their own American identity. They are in a state of constant flux, leading to certain setbacks in relationships and their life. The struggles the family faces is a picture of the struggles faced by the author's family, and also a representative of millions of immigrant families. The way Yolanda one of the four sisters struggles and adopts writing as a way to carve her identity is the story of the author herself.

The paper aims to highlight the hidden setbacks of migration and how prevalence of racism crushes the spirit of a new immigrant in a new country. The hurdles each character has to overcome, to live the American dream is a story of all the immigrants. Race is a reflector of difference. Race is "In Henry Louis Gates, Jr's poststructuralist terminology, 'the sense of difference defined in popular usages of the term "race" has both described and inscribed differences of language, belief system, artistic tradition, and gene pool, as well as all sorts of