

**FEMINISTIC APPROACH IN THE CREATIVE WORK OF ALICE WALKER**

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**Abstract**

This article is related to the creative work of Alice Walker and her suggestion of feminism as a stand-in point for black feminism to articulate its difference from white feminism was articulated in her 1983 collection of essays, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*. This philosophy emerged as a reaction to the marginalization of women of color in mainstream feminist critical theory and politics, which focused exclusively on gender oppression. Walker refers to black feminism as feminism, a term based on black folk culture to make it clear that the concept of femininity comes from the experience of being a black woman.

**Keywords:** Black life, black women, marginalization, race, gender issues.

The forced migration of millions of Africa women from the interiors of the west coast of African played a major role in the history of Black women. They were transported as human cargo across the Atlantic Ocean to plantations in the West Indies. The enslaved Africans were then sold to European colonies. The story of female slavery of black woman and their evolution is in some ways like the stay of Phoenix. They forced misery and suffering and yet were successful in redefining themselves. *The Colour Purple*, Walker's most acclaimed work, portrays the devastating effects of racial and sexual oppression. It shows an intense empathy for

the black woman who face violent subjugation by black woman, as well as by white racist.

Women live in a male dominated world where they have to play manifold roles. They have always been seen in relationship with the others. A woman is always supposed to accept herself as secondary to men. Shyness, humility, selflessness, meekness, modesty, and faithfulness are some qualities attributed to her. Etymologically, the term feminism has been derived from a Latin word "femina" meaning is "women". The term feminism is an ideology which recognizes the inadequacy of male chauvinism and demands equality of woman with men. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the term as having qualities of females. It was the French Dramatist, Alexander Dumas who first used the term in 1872 in a Pamphlet to designate the then emerging movement for women's rights.

Feminism is the ideology which seeks gender equality in economic, social or cultural fields, it also focuses on the inappropriateness and scantiness of patriarchal ideologies and stresses on the spiritual, social, cultural, economic and racial equality between women with men. It also seeks to free women of the seemingly. Interminable sexual and biological colonization. Feminism demands equal voice a freedom of self-expression and is thus a protest against male domination and subjugation of women. Black women writers analyze the complex and complicated social issues because of being black and women. They clearly express the immeasurable and fathomless pain, injustice and horror of slavery. Black women have faced many kinds of oppression both from the white people and black men. The experience has provided them enough material whereby they can vent their feelings of oppression. These writers have been deliberately made inconspicuous by both the traditions the women's literary tradition and by the African-American literary tradition.

A womanist loves women, appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's power, but above all is committed to the survival and wholeness of the whole person, male and female. Feminism celebrates the ideals of black life while providing a balanced presentation of black womanhood and gender struggle. It advocates inclusiveness instead of exclusivity, whether based on race or gender. This political and critical framework of feminism arose out of a desire to strengthen the bonds between men and women rather than confronting gender issues. The contention of this article is to examine the extent to which the author incorporates the concept of femininity in describing the struggles of his characters. In addition to fighting gender discrimination, women heroes are committed to the survival and integrity of all people, male and female.

The plight and suffering of the black woman, both black and female, is superior to that of black men and white women. They find themselves in a space where they can relate socially, politically and emotionally to no man's land. They cannot identify with either African-Americanism or mainstream feminism. True, they literally belong to the two minority groups of blacks and women, but they do not see where they exist.

For years, black women have fought and protested the "sexism of black literary history" as well as the "racism of feminist literary history" and tried to define themselves both within and outside of feminist thought dominated by women, especially white women, but always found themselves as "other women, the silent partner" (Showalter, 1997. p. 214). This aspect is true not only in their daily life, but also in the literary field theory. Many Black women consider the mainstream feminist movement to be narrow because it failed to address the diverse issues of women of color because it was "exclusively white, middle-class, Western, and heterosexual and ... [such] complicit in the marginalization of women", women of color, working-class women, Third World women, and lesbians" (Ward & Herndl, 1997: 259). Spivak and Allen also criticized white feminism based on binary oppositions such as patriarchy consisted of various forms of elitism and cultural imperialism seen in white women imposing their standards on the rest of the world's women.

The interrelated double jeopardy of race and gender forces Black women to interrogate feminist thought that denies the role of racism by consistently demystifying Black women, as well as Afro-contextualism that places importance on "race" required to question American anti-racism. as a problem of consensus in defining gender and sexuality as intersectional issues of secondary status "(Collins. 2005 p. 47). The result of this situation is that African American women interact with both feminists and black men in such a way that their status marginalized in both their discourse and politics. This situation is a "transformational, transformative, and transformative approach to our future that addresses various issues in Black life (motherhood, Black masculinity, gender and homicide, poverty, the crisis of Black womanhood) called for a feminist movement that "shows the secret." Hooks, 1989. p. 56).

Also called for a "feminist movement that responds to the needs of black women, men, and children strengthens our bonds with one another, deepens our sense of community, and the further liberation of individuals (hooks, 1992. p. 124).

Womanism celebrates the ideals of black life while providing a balanced presentation of black womanhood and the struggles of black gender. Feminist philosophy advocates inclusivity rather than exclusivity, even in matters related to the various sufferings that have plagued them from generation to generation racial, class, or gender discrimination. This political and critical framework of feminism addresses gender issues from home studying at the university. When he becomes ninety, she is

summoned home as Mr. Sweet is again near his death. Her efforts to survive him fail and he leaves her with the gift of his spirit. It was Mr. Sweet, who gives her a sense of her own selfhood and self-worth. Again it was he who makes her realize that blacks are beautiful by first making her realize that she is also physically attractive. "Mr. Sweet used to call me his princess, and I believed it. She made me feel pretty at five and six, and simply outrageously devastating at the age of eight and a half" (Walker. p.117). She has also made her realize that the blacks can control their own destiny by first making her believe that she has the ability to make her own destiny.

The narrator here, who is both a participant and contributor in the celebration of the spirit, is immensely enlightened by the old man. Her acceptance of the guitar from Mr. Sweet signifies that she is willing to continue and take responsibility of her heritage and continue to sing the blues. The acceptance of the guitar also becomes the external symbol of her coming to terms with the past and her community. The unnamed narrator finally becomes the representative voice of the community.

To sum up, according to Langston Hughes the function of black literature is to illuminate and highlight the conditions of the black people. Black women's literature is a movement of self-love, self-respect and self-determination. Alice Walker puts in her writings an emphasis on African-American women's struggle against patriarchal domination and suppression. Her writings emphasize the strength of black women. She is candidly sympathetic to all the people irrespective of sex. Sexuality plays a major role in the life of African-Americans and their writings. Her writings are based on Black women in an African American country. *The Color Purple*, which was awarded Pulitzer prize in 1998, depicts women's double sufferings one in the form of racial injustice and the other in the form of brutal oppression by the male. All the black narratives capsule a deep account of women's real life experience that develop from their own households, work places, even from their communities. Black American feminist have identified the central theme in Black feminism. Linda Abbandonato argues that in *The Colour Purple* Celie, the protagonist defines herself differently, disengages herself from the cultural scripts of sexuality and gender that produces her as feminine subject. The novel ends with Celie overcoming all her antagonists and is joyfully reunited with those who love her. The novel moves from degeneration to regeneration. So, Alice Walker's most famous work, the award winning and best-selling novel *The Color Purple*, chronicles the life of a poor and abused Southern Black Woman who eventually triumphs over oppression through affirming female relationship. Walker has described herself as a womanist her term for a black feminist. Therefore, for Alice Walker the term feminism evoked western feminism with its history of privilege, while the term black feminism was imprecise and to her, was awkward sounding enough to be a name of a fly spray. She wanted a word that evoked the strength, passion, grace of black women's history of creativity and struggle.

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