

CHILD ABUSE AND SEXUAL DRIVE IN ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE*

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ABSTRACT

The novel *The Color Purple* scrutinizes gender predicament. In addition, it accords consciousness on sexual drive and gender. The assorted characters exploit gender dissimilarities and sexual directions. The paper explains gender identifications of the black women in the novel *The Color Purple*. In the book *Gender Trouble* by Judith Butler inquires the sexual assimilation and gender equality. The present paper delivers the issues of sexuality and erotic assimilation. Walker's book stops by breaking down the traditional measures on child abasement and sexual drive. She also urges for coexistence among people from the various erotic assimilations.

Keywords: child abuse and sexual drive, dissimilarities, identity, color purple, sexual assimilation.

Alice Walker's true intention of writing this novel is to give voice to black woman and to emancipate their freedom. Walker shows the evolution of her major character Celie, a poor, barely literate southern black woman, a sexually abused child to a passive wife and finally an emancipated woman. Celie trapped by racist and sexist oppression the way she seeks to define herself. Celie's relationship with her step-father and husband are characterized as sexual oppression in the patriarchal society of America. Celie endures a barrage of rape and harshness that causes her to experience body as fragmented and as being possessed by her victimizers. As Griffin observes that "the body constitutes the site of oppression and become the source of permanent anxiety." Celie has no control over her body and physical environment.

Child Abuse and sexual drive are distinctive from each other. Gender is the position of being a female to make cultural and communal disparity. Sexual drive encompasses individuals sexually to disclose themselves in various orientations. Feminism involves ethnicity, self-realization and description for the colored women. Feminism has shown to be difficult when trying to get equal rights for both genders. The character shows the misery of female gender in the elder society. The widely regarded concept of gender either from male or female explicit various culture. Categories like “race, sex, class and sexual orientation may be described as ‘master statuses’”(1). These ‘statuses’ influence an individual’s daily life and the building blocks of one’s identity.

Sexual assimilation or sexual drive determines an individual’s fondness for a sexual partner of the same sex or the opposite sex. Homosexual is an attraction of same gender. Heterosexual is an attraction of the opposite sex. Bisexual is an attraction of both the sexes. Generally, heterosexuals are considered normal while homosexuals are considered abnormal. This is because of the social and cultural ideology fostered by the society. In the male subjugated society men are the resolution builders. In spite of benefiting from patriarchies the men are still fatality. This protects his place in the family to dominate over his children and wife. Boys usually select the heterosexuality because of anxiety. Mr. Albert is the wonderful instance of brutality brought by heterosexuality in the patriarch society.

The black people in the society were seen as insignificant beings distinguished from the white people. The colored people in the novel are enforcing into an inferior class over dictatorship, not only of skin colour, but also they are women and lesbians. Celie is an invisible woman, “a character traditionally silenced and effaced in fiction; and by centering on her, Walker replots the heroine’s text” (1106). She gives voice to Celie and permits her to express all the miseries have undergone. The novel begins with a fourteen-year old girl’s cry for help. Celie suffers repeated rapes and brutal beatings by the man she believes to be her father, Alphonso. It begins with a patrimonial injunction of silence: “Dear God, I am not never fourteen Years old. I am I have always been a good girl. May be you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me”(11).

She gets pregnant from him twice. He takes both the children away. Besides, raping and impregnating her, her stepfather beats and forces into marriage with a widower named Albert. After her marriage with Mr. Albert, she suffers more. She wants to take care of husband and his children. At the very beginning, Celie cannot make too much sense of her experiences. She is rather the passive victim of her environment: “But I don’t know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive,” (26) “I don’t say anything. I stay where I’m told.

But I am alive”(29). Moreover, it seems she can bear all the sorrows inflicted upon her. Celie talks to Nettie, before leaving from her husband’s home. She says, “It worse than that, I think. If I was buried, I wouldn’t have to work. But I just say, Never mine, never mine, long as I can spell G-o-d I got somebody along”(26).

At very beginning, Mr. Albert does not want to marry Celie. He wants to get married with Nettie. But his father does not want him to marry, because she is young. Therefore, he lets him to take Celie by offering some cows to be with him. Mr. Albert takes three months to think of marrying Celie. Mr. Albert marries Celie not because of her goodness: hard working, discipline, and caring attitude but he seems more interested in getting her cows if he takes Celie to be his wife:

.... Well, He say, real slow, I can’t let you have Nettie. She too young. Don’t know nothing but what you tell her. Sides, I want her to git some more schooling. Make a schoolmaster out of her. But I can let you have Celie. She the oldest anyway. She ought to marry first. She ain’t fresh tho, but I spect you know that. She spoiled. Twice. But you don’t need a fresh women no how. I got a fresh one in there myself and sick all the time. He spit, over the railing. The children git on her nerve, she not much of a cook. And she big already....(20)

Celie told within this threat: the narrative about breaking silences and appropriately, its formal structure creates the illusion that is filled with unmediated “voices”. According to Carole J. Sheffield, “the right of men to control female body is a cornerstone of patriarchy. Violence and the threat of violence against females represent the need of patriarchy to deny the woman’s body of her own property.” (110) Celie asked to maintain silence between her and her father Alphonso. “He starts to choke me, saying You better shut up and git used to it. But I don’t never git used to it. And now I feel sick every time I be the one to cook.” (11)

These difficulties were incredibly traced gender and social class. Due to the evidence Celie dragged out of school to take care of her siblings. Celie’s father too distressed for being a black man. While women in the black community were exploited and misused, there was a woman to confront the odds. Sofia, Harpo’s wife, fought for her father, brothers and uncles since she was young. She learnt in her life that a woman is not safe among a group of men. She even stands for her interest against her husband who tries to beat her submissive and to reduce status in the community.

Her father’s continuous comment makes her to feel as an ugly women. She lost her self-assurance from the invariable negation from men. Celie had two men in her life, but none of

them showed love towards her. She was sexually injured by her father in her early life. In her marriage life, she was miss-treated by Mr. Albert. She also dispossessed her individuality as a wife since Mr. Albert ruled over their marriage through violence. Celie is the suppressed black woman and lost her individuality till she met Shug.

Shug loves Celie and kisses her. At first Celie is astonished, but she kisses Shug back. They do this until they end up sleeping in each other's arms. Celie essentially admits that she never enjoyed sex since she had been used by men to persuade their interests rather than having common happiness. She renounced by the regrettable heterosexual life experience. The homosexual relationship between Celie and Shug unpredicted, but felt usual to both. Obviously, Celie was not a lesbian. Sexual direction is not a permanent role but rather a changeable that can change. It is clear that Celie's love towards Shug is a free choice and exaggerated by her past heterosexual relationships. She has right to choose another direction that suits and satisfies her. Ross observes that "Celie's orgasm suggests a rebirth or perhaps an initial birth into a world of love, a reenactment of the primal pleasure of the child at the mother's breast."(69)

According to Phillips, L (2006), Womanism is a theory based on discovery of the Second Wave Feminism Movements in regards to history and experiences of black women and other marginalized groups. Alice Walker coined the term "womanist" into a feminist vocabulary to depict her idealistic point on the issue of gender. She had become a major articulator of black feminism through her teaching, speeches, political action and literary work. Still, she felt the inherent tension in the term "black feminism" in that it represented Sexism and racism as if they were two entirely separate phenomena, a fact that did not reflect her people's history on her experience (Monach Notes, 1987).

The excessive among male and female is not clear in the sense. Each female has some male individuality as Shug. She equipped masculine and gentle feminine. Her uniqueness challenges the conventional label of a black woman. The relationship among Shug and Celie is the interior relationship of the novel. The relationship nurtured in a short period of time because each one fulfills other needs. Celie's need is to have a person to care for her. Shug also has a peculiar desire for Mr. Albert and enjoys making love with Mr. Albert. Being bisexual reveals she was not a typical. As the story progress, the two ladies join together against Mr. Albert. The novel tries to demonstrate individuals with different sexual assimilation. It can come together and have a common goal and work in harmony. As portrayed by Shug, bisexuality is an identity which brings potential of opportunities for

establishing relationships without struggle. The novel tries to eradicate the double aggression of men and women in this world in harmony, with gender indifference not being an issue.

The *Color Purple* is the story about the two sisters. She expressed her feeling of alienation through her letter to god. The two sisters placed in different places at certain stage they meet together. Celie left in America, while Nettie was taken to Africa. The novel shows the patriarchal domination that affects black women. Alice Walker is capable to discard light on the kind of subjugation black women. It has hurdle for women to have the freedom to move forward in the society. Walker aims back to the movement to improve lives of black women in patriarchal systems that pull them down. She tries to show merely solving the racial oppression in America. She illustrates women are still demoralized within their own black communities which is not attached to America racism.

At the inauguration each gender knows their role and is collectively established. The male gender has the authority to control in his house as well as influence over his wife and children. It is clear that she has no supremacy over her fate since she moves from a slave of her father to a slave of the man. This determines Celie being a woman, has been deprived of the freedom of variety. It is obvious that the female gender diluted to the point and a man has the right to beat up his wife. The attitude is the only technique to keep the female gender to beat them up is obscure and has made the female gender subject to the male gender.

Mr. Albert explains his son Harpo about women to be handled. He confesses women are like children. By whipping their wives, men are able to oblige their need to substantiate. They are the heads in the family and keep the women subjects to them. Reading the novel, one gets the offer of a woman being a slave and an individual who talked upon and beaten. Her role is to keep the man happy and accomplish the needs that she asked to complete.

A few characters in the novel have seen to challenge their gender roles and patterns. For an instance, Sofia disputes her gender role in the novel. Harpo recognizes that Sofia is not a typical woman in the society. He understands Sofia knows and makes rigid decisions in her life. This is not a custom in the society to be ruled with patriarchal rules. She makes stiff stand points without aimlessly listening to her husband. Harpo forced and look for her input on issues. It is obvious that the female gender substandard to the male gender which is hereditary from generation to generation. This makes complex for the female gender to break out of the confusion of gender unfairness. Harpo does not think of beating Sofia is a good idea, but since his wife makes his relationship from bad to worse.

Sofia concludes by fighting back Harpo and wins. Sofia's nature was clear from the beginning that she did not care about people's opinion on her. It is an immense step taken by

a woman portrayed by the novel. Only a few numbers of women would be confident enough to fight back. Sofia defines new potential for women as she challenges the custom that the female gender is a subject to the male gender. She loves Harpo, but will kill him for dejecting her. Harpo enforced to recognize the period of depressing the female gender and women are ready to stand for their attitude. He realizes that he does not have to confirm public standards and this made to improve good relationship with his wife.

Gender roles are distinct in the beginning. Later, the male adjust to the times as the roles change. The role of darning and chatting thoughts and emotions related to the female gender and the male gender maintains remoteness from such activities. At the end of the novel, Mr. Albert sits with Celie as he talks about love and feelings. Another character Shug defies the norms of gender favoritism. It is a convention by the age of twenty, a woman should be married and have children, but it is not so for Shug. Being a singer, she opts to travel and achieve her dreams as a successful woman. Her character challenges the norms as a woman; she is not predictable to follow her ambitions, but rather more on her children and family. However, Shug's children maintain to live with her parents as she pursues her dreams.

Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* presents a dispute that child abuse and sexuality should be looked in a dissimilar manner. She points out different people view child abuse and sexuality as simply masculine and feminine. It is crucial to comprehend women are dissimilar and significant as an integrated group would be placing barriers on their potentialities.

According to the novel, a woman fails to fight back to all forms of oppression that comes her way. Both Sofia and Nettie play a critical role in Celie's life. They exhibit Celie the pathway to bring towards freedom. Shug plays a decisive role in showing Celie to be empowered through her sexual individuality. After realizing, Celie has no feelings towards men including Mr. Albert. Celie tries to learn more about sexuality by exploitations on her own. She understands sex is not linked with admiration. Her sexual relationship with Shug allows retrieving the feminine relationship that was deprived by the male statistics in her life. Celie is proficient to regain herself and sexual identity through support from her female counterparts. Nettie taught Celie to have the will power to struggle her opponents before she felt. Meeting Shug in her life, Celie has taught self-value and antagonism. All her relationships happen in isolation, but with Celie to the possessions, she learns and develops sovereignty, worth and audacity.

Throughout the novel, Walker hints one's deliberation and approach to be widen their sexuality. In the opening, Celie is incapable to utter herself to the people. She used as an

object and relics submissive because of power lack. Celie studies that she can generate a new storyline for herself, which would oppose the principles forced upon her gender. Some of the relationships among the women have deeply empowered them to apprehend. They can fight beside gender inequity and sexual violence. The novel does a remarkable profession of corrupting the norms. The unlike sexual directions are noticed. The novel shows how women have been discriminated and damaged. A few women stand out by defying the norms and gender dissimilarity.

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