

Women's Struggle In "The Color Purple" By Alice Walker: A Black Feminism Study

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Abstract

The Color Purple by Alice Walker is a fiction novel that talks about African- American woman. *The Color Purple* was published in 1982 in New York USA, and made into a film in 1985 won the Pulitzer Prize awards. Based on the novel, African American women whose were struggle in the face of oppression that is dominated by men that occurred in America. This study aims to answer two formulations of the problem, namely; to determine the forms of oppression over women occur in the novel and to find out how the struggle of women in the novel. This study used a theoretical approach of Black Feminism belongs to Barbara Smith who saw a literary work of the whole social and historical context in which literary works are created as concept of criticism used by activists of black feminist at the time. The researcher used qualitative method to get validation data. The results of this study indicate that the form of oppression on women character in this novel is very diverse. There are three forms of oppression which is reflected in the novel that physical oppression, verbal oppression, and relational oppression. Then there are two forms of struggle carried out by the character of women is a direct confrontation and sisterhood bonding. Forms of fight carried out by Sofia and Shug Avery are directly. Sofia indicated the battle confrontation was clearly seen as the empowerment of struggle carried out by Shug Every became the main inspiration for the influence of character a female character in the vicinity. In the next fight Celie inspired by Shug Every also fight and was followed by Mary Agnes. Then do not miss the fight carried out by Netty.

Keyword: Women, Struggle, Oppression, Black Feminism, The Color Purple



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A. Introduction

In the history of women's empowerment, which occurred over the years, there is low participation of women in development due to various forms of discrimination against women (Khotimah, p 1). The role of women as a form of social provision is believed to cause adverse social inequality of women in various community entities such as social, cultural, political, and economic (khotimah, p 4). The opinion of the researcher on the above statement is that women as women as objects are always wrong in the social community, political culture, and economy.

In ILO Convention no.111 in 1958, discrimination (in terms of Employment and Opportunity) is defined as "any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, extraction or national origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impede equality of opportunity or treatment in respect employment or occupation". Discrimination is an event that is common in community, this is because human tendency to discriminate against others. When a person is treated unfairly because of the characteristics of ethnic, sectarian, gender, race, religion and belief, political orientation, physical condition, or other, that supposedly is the basis of discrimination.

Then comes the history of diverse civilization perception of women. All civilizations saw that the one who was born as a woman is a lack of luck. And women are in the positions that are not strategic. So everything is dominated by men. Based on diverse civilization, the researcher chose this title to find out the forms of oppression toward women and how the struggle of the women is in the novel of the *Color Purple* by Alice Walker. In the field of feminist criticism, black women struggled to establish a tradition that would reflect their distinct concerns. Smith on her path-breaking essay "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism", says:

Feminism is the political theory that struggles to free all women: women of color, working class women, poor women, disabled women, lesbians, old women - as well as white, economically privileged, heterosexual women. Anything less than this vision of total freedom is not feminism but merely feminist self-aggrandizement (Smith, p 27)

From the statement above, the researcher found that Smith strengthens the notion of feminism as all categories of women that have the freedom in the theory of feminism and black women are not listed in that category. Then black women are not included in the category of feminism. Indirectly, black women are not recognized and they are not seen by feminists and black feminist only be regarded as self-aggrandizement.

Black feminism refers to a variety of feminisms which are identified by their opposition to the racism and sexism which have encountered by black women. Its various forms undertake a sustained critique of the racism and ethnocentrism of white-dominated systems and practices including feminism. As Valerie Smith has argued, its critique is multifaceted.

Black feminists seek not only to dismantle the assumption of distant cultures, and to recover and reclaim the lives of black women, but also to develop methods of analysis for interpreting the ways in which race and gender are inscribed. (Smith, p 18)

Based on Valerie Smith's statement above the researcher describes that black feminist cultural assumptions not only reveal the dominant or majority in whites but also recover and reclaim the life of minorities as a black woman. By developing analytical methods to interpret where race and gender of black women are recognized in writing. Black feminists must understand oppression in their lives. To view the important issue of how black women organize in order to understand them self until the totality of repression that happened to them. They cannot prioritize one aspect of persecution to exclude or other aspects then the synthesis of class., race, gender and sexuality that could bring more black women are identified.

It can be seen in the novel of *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker that is experienced by Celie. Celie is a black woman that is discriminated by gender and violence are doomed to subordinate them self the black woman and object to racist abuse which is a fundamental element of society trust is around. When we see the writer of *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker is one of the black feminists in her personal experience. She was fighting for herself and her family, living below the poverty line and arc always depressed by the community where her parents worked in fields owned by others.

Moreover, she started her age of 14 when she was touched and raped by her father and tried to protect her sister from the same fate. and continued during her marriage to "Mr". Mr is Celie's husband. a brutal man.

who had oppressed her. Celio eventually learns that her husband has been keeping from her letter and rough Netti. Then she helped Shug Every when Shug Every is sick.

Based on black women character In the novel of *The Color Purple* can be found the related with black society today, especially African Americans. For example, in the book *Black Women* In the United State, the rights of Blacks has been recognized as the elections in 2008. In South Carolina, Clinton won 89% of DJack women's voices, a country where 78% of Black women voted for Obama in 2008. he also won 93% of votes Black women in Alabama, a state where he only won 18% of Black women vote in presidential elections first. Black female voice largely out of a sense of responsibility and is strongly influenced by issues

B. Methods

1. Research Instruments

The purpose of this research is to find out What are the forms of oppression toward women that occurs in the novel of *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker? And how is the struggle of women in the novel? This research focusses the objectives of this thesis, the researcher has to determine what aspect of study should cover. Therefore, this study is pointed to find out form of oppression toward women that occurs in the novel of *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, the struggle of women. The theoretical framework that is used by the researcher in this research is the theory of black feminism issued by Barbara Smith. Based on that theory, feminism is defined as the political theory that struggles to free all women: women of color, working class women, poor women, disabled women, lesbians, old women as well as white, economically privileged, heterosexual women. Anything less than this vision of total freedom is not feminism but merely feminist self-aggrandizement. (Smith, p.27). It means that feminism is the theory of the struggle to free all women from any discrimination but there is one group that still oppressed by others, they are black feminism.

This study uses a qualitative method. According to Moleong, qualitative research is research that aims to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the subject of the study such in the aspect of behaviour, perception, motivation, action, holistic, and by way of description in the form of words and language in a specific context in which the natural and the utilizing shared natural methods. (Moleong, p.6).

The data of this study can be classified into two. The first is primary data namely all data derived from the novel of *The Color Purple*. They are the words and sentences written on 296 pages. the novel that was written by Alice Walker in 1982 published as the first Pocket Books by mass market printing December, 1985 in Avenue of United Stated (U.S.A) New York. The secondary data are taken from various sources such as articles, journals, thesis, essays, books and other sources related to the novel of *The Color Purple*.

2. Data Collection

There are three steps that were used by researcher to get the data. First, the researcher read and found the understanding of novel which consists of 296 pages. Second, the researcher collected and underlined the pages that she needs to make appropriate with the statement of the problem. And the last is retyping all the data that have been chosen based on the original quotations.

3. Data Analysis

After the data were collected, the researcher analyzed them as the following: the researcher identified the data and analyzed them based on the statement of the problem and find out about women's struggle as reflected by Celie and other women in the novel, and the last drawing conclusion based on the result of data analysis.

C. Finding

According to Coloroso {p. 4 7}, forms of oppression are divided into four types namely, physical oppression, verbal oppression, relational oppression, electronics oppression. First, physical oppression is a kind of oppression of the most visible and most can be identified among the forms of oppression. Second, verbal oppression is oppression in the form of words. Third, the relational oppression is

weakening dignity victims of repression systematically through neglect, isolation, exclusion, avoidance. Fourth, electronic oppression is oppression by electronic means and internet facilities such as computers, mobile phones, cameras, and via the website or social media such as chat rooms, e-mail, Facebook, twitter and other sources. In *The Color Purple* show the forms of oppression and how struggles, in other words, the fight actually happened in that period. When oppression happens then struggle even arise. These struggles are ways in which to avoid oppression. In the novel of *The Colour Purple* only three oppressions occurred, they are physical oppression, verbal oppression, and relational oppression. Physical oppression is a kind of oppression of the most visible and most can be identified among the forms of oppression. Types of physical oppression is hit, choked, elbowing, punching, kicking, biting, scratching, as well as someone spit up into painful positions, as well as damaging and destroying, clothes and belongings of someone who is oppressed. Form of physical oppression who found by researcher

In the quotation in the page one until page two, the oppression occurred to Celie, this oppression is physically carried out by the father of Celie and Nettie they called Pa. Celie pain on him and he was crying.

First, he put his thing up against my hip and sort of wiggle it around. Then he grab hold my titties. Then he pushes his thing inside my pussy. When that (Walker, p. 1) ... hurt, I cry. He starts to choke me, saying you better shut up and git used to it. (Walker, p. 2)

On the next day, Pa hit Celie. He said that Celie glanced at the other men in the church as in the novel excerpt below He beat me today cause he say I winked at a boy in church. I may have got something in my eye but I didn't wink. I don't even look at mens. That's the truth. I look at women, tho, cause I'm not scared of them. (Walker, p 6) Furthermore, the direct oppression of a stepchild Celie when she had become the wife of Mr, Celie was beaten by Mr 's eldest son and he beat Celie by the stone.

He pick up a rock and laid my head open. The blood run all down tween my breasts. Walker, p. 13)

Oppression that happens to Celie is the oppression from her father whom she called Pa. Pa oppressive Celie by gender, she was oppressed as a woman and as black woman. Celie be treated like a wife who satisfy the lust Pa, so when Celie gave birth two babies, Two babies were sold by Pa to white people. They are male and female.

When Mayor heard Sofia, He was angry and he slapped Sofia so sofia reply to the mayor, and the police came to attack children and Sofia also attacked the mayor like the quotation below

Mayor looks at Sofia, push his wife out the way. Stick out his chest. Girl, what you say to Miss Mliiie? Sofia says, I say, Hell no. He slaps her. I stop telling it right there. (Walker, p. 90)

Based on some quotation above, researcher found that physical oppression occurred In this novel such as rape, licking,

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D. Analysis

Based on the beginning of the novel, it is not a form of struggle. It can look into the character Celie. When he gets the oppression of his father, the first thing to do is struggle Celie wrote to pour out his heart to God as the following quotation:

Dear God I am fourteen years old. and I have always been a good. girl. Maybe you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me.(Walker,p. 1)

There are forms of direct confrontation. As Her struggle, Netty always answered what Samuel said, Tashi is very intelligent, I said. She could be a teacher. A nurse. She could help the people in the village. (Walker, p. 167) Based on quotation above, it shows the difference of white and black with the example Tashi's father. Tashi is a white girl but although she is being a white girls, she oppression by her father as a child, she cannot free as a child, she also hard work. Samuel as Tashi's father said that he knows best for his child, he understands how different life with Blacks. He stated that the black race is weak. No matter where they come from, they only traders on the coast who want to change the life of the white man. On pages 70-71 Sofia left Harpo, because she could not stand against Harpo's behaviour that cannot be changed, and he want to curb her as Pa that always restrain Celie . In this decision Sofia take action because she wanted to tight for their rights as women, she deserves a good treatment from her husband. I do not know say Sofil Maybe I will not go. Deep down I st ill love Harpo, Bu;? he just makes me real tired. She yawns. again. I need a vacation, she says. Then she go back to the woodpile, st art making some more shingles for the roof. (Walk.er, P- 70) The words are uttered by Miss Millie Mayor's wife. I is • d .. no" to insulting Sofia and her children. Sofia directly answered Mis Millie.

E. Conclusion

In conclusion, there are three forms of oppression that occurs in women in their character novel. The firstly physical oppression is oppression committed by a person or group, using either the object or not resulting in physical morbidity in people who are oppressed. Physical oppression happens to character Celie, Netty, Sofia, Tashi. Secondly, verbal oppression is oppression in the form of words. Oppression occurred in the all-female characters in the novel. Then, the thirdly is relational oppression is weakening dignity victims of oppression systematically through neglect, isolation, exclusion, avoidance. Based on three forms of oppression that occurs in female character in the novel, the most dominant Oppression is oppression through the words called verbal oppression.

Next, there are two ways of women's struggle in the novel. There are first direct confrontation is a struggle and the struggle of family ties. Direct confrontation is the way of an enemy or difficulty with dealing directly and openly. How to oppose the openly performed by the character Sofia when she was confronted by the wife of the mayor who insulted her so Sofia directly hit the mayor's wife, then the character Netty, when she was in the house of Samuel and Corrine, Netty always answered what they said to her. The second is sisterhood bonding. Sisterhood bonding is a bond of cooperation made by a group of black women on the character Celie, Sofia, Mary Agnes, and also Shug Every. They decided to stay together in Memphis to begin a new life. The cooperation is black feminism.

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