

# Alice Walker, The Writer for Marginalized and Invisible Women of Color

Paper Submission: 15/10/2021, Date of Acceptance: 24/10/2021, Date of Publication: 25/10/2021

## Abstract

The arising of African American Women writings brought in a double threat of racism in the African American Women's movement. Gloria Hull looked at the predicament of Black women in *All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of us are Brave*. All the Women are White. It is a landmark anthology that made black women turn towards each other for better understanding of their problem. Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970) and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) raised the question of self-identity, respect and the existence of Black women, which were hardly valued in their society. Toni Morrison expanded the theme of Black people's relationship with African American past in her works *Songs of Solomon* (1977), *Beloved* (1987) and *Jazz* (1991).

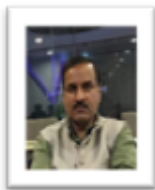
Alice Walker, winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award followed the tradition of writing by raising the issues of poverty and family violence. These issues created a tremendous impact on the African American literary canon. Her *Color Purple* (1982), received so much attention for its powerful emotional impact and epistolary structure. Her literary contribution includes novels, short stories, essays and poetry. Walker moved from the North to the West but her soul returned to the South of her childhood and became the voice for the silent and unseen generation. The present research makes an attempt to discuss the problems of Black women and would focus on the attempts made by Alice Walker to normalize the life of Women of Color. She tries to uplift the hidden strength of every woman by writing on different challenges put before them by society.

**Keywords:** Marginalized, Invisible, Meaning of Color Purple, Personal Growth, Condescension, Suppressed Life.

## Introduction

Alice Walker is an African-American writer. She is the youngest daughter of her parents, Willie Lee and Minnie Tallah Grant Walker. She completed her education at Spelman and Sarah Lawrence College. Walker's novel basically related with the racial, biological differences that a woman had to face in her life. She takes a strong stand against the patriarchal, misogynistic views, that she called a "system" which are just a societal and psychological restriction on the growth of one's life. She has won several awards. Most notably, she won 'Pulitzer Prize' and 'National Book Award' for her *The Color Purple*. Just as black grouped to an underclass by virtue of their color women are related to a separate caste by virtue of their sex.

Walker's novel focuses on the experiences, desires, needs of women of color. Her renowned *The Color Purple* is a novel of celebration of heroism of black women who fight to escape from the yoke of domination. The book's title itself signifies celebration of inner joy, beauty, the pleasure of living and gaining spiritual and personal growth. Her first novel *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* locates the black women as rejected, economically and psychologically, carrying the burden of two folds as black person and black women. Her second novel *Meridian* explores two aspects of black women: the girl who is sufficiently not a woman and the woman who is not sufficiently independent. Her most beautiful novel *Our Mother's Garden* is written in an essay form. It dedicates the life and literature of those invisible women who were born with great talents but never got opportunities to shine. "You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down" is a story of a courageous woman who suffered the hardships of life, oppressed life but never defeated.



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After reading and knowing the history of and culture of African-American women, I could understand how great Walker's writing is and how well she uses her fiction to impart knowledge. Walker's novel educates her readers and the women who are unable to find the purple color in their life. Further, I would like to give a brief note on her some of the important books:

**Aim of the Study**

The aim of the present work is to study, to discuss the suppressed life of African women as it is evident in the novels of Alice Walker and to explore the theme and writing technique used by Alice Walker to create an empathy in the mind and the heart of the readers for her characters.

**As a Revolutionaries Against the old Patriarchal Myths in "Meridian"**

*Meridian* is a challenging read. It dips into places that are often raw and sometimes beyond comprehension. The novel is described as being about a black woman named Meridian Hill. It is a story of a young black courageous woman, who dedicated her heart and soul as an activist in the civil rights work in the American South in the 60's. In many ways, the book focuses on women's lives and examines how the past and the present interconnect and construct the future.

*Meridian*, Walker's second work of long fiction, is set against the turbulent backdrop of the civil rights movement, which gained force in the 1960s. Novel triggers civil disobedience, demonstrations, etc. It protests against the racist and segregationist policies that controlled and shaped the lives of African American in the south.

**Downfall Leads to Self Realisation in "The Third Life of Grange Copeland"**

*The Third Life of Grange Copeland* recounts the lives of three generations growing up in Georgia, where Alice Walker herself grew up. Grange Copeland is a black tenant farmer who left his land and family in search of a better future. He travelled North in search of respect and happiness. However, then he discovers that the racism and poverty he experienced in the south are, in fact, everywhere. When he returns to Georgia some years later, he finds that his son Brownfield has been imprisoned for the murder of his wife. But hope comes in the form of the third generation as the guardian of the couple's youngest daughter, Grange Copeland who glimpses a chance of both spiritual and social freedom.

Despite the fictional nature of the story, the book challenges readers to feel the tragic life of black, who suffered during that time. The consequences of slavery and racism had on their real lives. Grange and his family may (or may not) be figments of Ms. Walker's imagination, but she brings them to life in the most masterful way.

**Nothing Could Deprive A High Spirited Woman in "You Can't Keep Good Women Down"**

Both educational and compelling, this collection of stories tackles controversial topics with empathy and hope, from cultural theft to misogyny. Walker writes about the terrible things that can happen to women. But as the title suggests, her heroines keep rising, finding defiant joy in lovers, friends and especially themselves.

This novel is a story on the different complex lives of women. Proud women who have suffered through real hardships. Women who are still going through the death ring of immaturity and the woman who loves being what they are. Walker is one of the bravest and honest writers who could create multidimensional women's character and their life in order to educate different classes of society.

**Celie's Spiritual Transformation to go Purple In "The Color Purple"**

"*The Color Purple*" is a tale of a young black girl named Celie, born in poverty and segregation. *The Color Purple* deals with the sexual encounter of Celie by her husband and the man whom she calls her 'father'. Her two children were taken away from her and also got separated from her sister Nettie, whom she loved the most. Then she was pushed to an ugly marriage. But then she met the glamorous singer, Shug Avery. With her Celie was able

to discover the joy and power of her own spirit, she freed herself from the past and reunited with those she loves.

Alice Walker through *The Color Purple* advocates the story of black men and women of her age. Being both black and female, the black women found themselves socially, politically and emotionally situated in a no man's land. *The Color Purple* claims for the women's existence for their rightful place. She wants to ask, if God has created both men and women, then how patriarchal prejudices could create a differentiation among men and women. Being a creator of God we (the women), must have the same respect and value as that of men.

### **Digging Out Hidden Talents in "Our Mother's Garden"**

*Our Mother's garden* is a collection of thirty six pieces of essays. It can be read in three parts. First part is written or dedicated to those women who were born with remarkable talent but remained unknown. Walker in Part I talked of early writers such as Rebecca Jackson. However this part includes much about Zora Neale Hurston, who wrote the book 'Mules and men'. Mules and men recounts for southern black authors who were forgotten. Walker called the book a marvelous piece of writing and marked Hurston as "A Genius" of the South Novelists. Also walker applauds Jean Toomer, for his sensitivity to women and his ultimate condescension towards them. Part I is all about Walker's exploration for the unsung heroines who were never represented in American literature.

Part-II includes Walker's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, which helped her in exploring its negative and positive aspects. The Civil Rights Movement for Black was like the ray of hope for their way to freedom and achieving the same respect and equality the whites had. Walker wanted to bring a new change in the nomination of the Civil Right Movement. She wanted to take the ballot machine door to door as only this action could provide the right to move to both privileged and underprivileged one.

Part-III is about Walker's concern for the future generation. Walker begins this part with a poem 'Motherroot' by Marilou Awaikta. This part is written for the encouragement and blossoming of the black women.

Walker believes in change for the individual and for society, for the survival of the African American women. Although walker has been labeled a feminist writer, she prefers the term "womanists" rather than 'feminist' for she believes that the term womanist captures the spirit of the African American woman. The spirit of African American women remains Walker's primary commitment. Walker writes to women of all colors and cultures, urging them to know their inner selves and bind up wounds resulting from centuries of silence and abuse. Walker in *The Color Purple* by Celie's spiritual transformation wants to convey the above message for black women. Purple symbolizes the joy of life. She wants women to realize their inner joy, to realize the importance of the color purple in their life. Alice Walker in her *The Color Purple* says:

*"I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field and don't notice it.*

### **Objective of the Study**

1. To study Alice Walker's contribution to the novel of ideas and novel of reality and her overall assessment as a popular novelist of the twentieth century.
2. To observe the tools of autobiographical elements, personal anger and racial difference.

### **Methodology**

Conceptual and descriptive research methods will be implemented for the proposed thesis.

The expected resources would be:

1. Novels
2. Magazines
3. Films

4. Interviews
5. Reviews
6. Questionnaires etc.

**Conclusion**

Mention here, what conclusion did you reach based on your research: Alice Walker writes through various personal experiences. The researcher has collected Walker's five most widely read books for her research work. With her first novel "*The Third Life of Grange Copeland*", Walker discussed the theme of gender and racial inequality. "*Meridian*" is set when the Civil Rights Movement was gaining momentum. "*The Color Purple*" is written in native language, in an illiterate women's language. The themes of the books proves the writer's intentions of using human communities in her novels to extend the feelings of otherness and point of ignorance in women. The writer knows to create empathy between the protagonists and the reader, so that the reader could feel the pain of her character. Walker's novel follows the story of a Southern black family, especially the effects of racism on black mothers, who were born with equivalent talent but were left unnoticed. Her "*Mother's Garden*" proves the theme of ignorance that made them completely invisible in their society..

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