

Rise of Black Feminism

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Abstract

The present article tries to discuss the rise of black feminism. Through the various readings, it is now clear that the history of black women has shown its growth in three phases. The first would be the physical and psychological abused of Black women who lived during slavery and Reconstruction. Secondly, the grooming of Black women writers like Phyllis Wheatley and Nella Larsen. Thirdly, the Black women held onto a creative spark within themselves and recreated themselves in the context of their culture.

Keywords: Black Feminism, three wave of feminism, intersectionality

Introduction

Black feminism is a philosophical concept that converts the idea of black women being equally valuable as many white women or men. It raises voices against both sexism and racism bound together.

The black feminism movement came into existence because the black feminist spent that their issues and concerns and agonies and hardships were are not being raised by the white women. This discrimination by the women themselves led to the formation of such a mass movement. Same the national black women Organization was formed in 1973.

Chapter-I

The movement started in England, France, America and several places around the world for upliftment and liberalization of women who are compared to face various sufferings and hardships by the patriarchal society. However, the black feminist movement was a big difference. The former demanded equal rights and opportunities as men whereas the latter demanded to be at least treated as human or women and not slaves. An eminent US civil rights advocate Kimberly Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality in 1989 to elaborate on the hardships and experiences of women as being women and more importantly being blackwomen. Another important term for the word used in the 1970 and 80s was "Womanism". Black feminist and author Alice Walker in 1979 used this word. It meant black feminists or feminists of color.

Black feminism can be studied in different periods. Firstly, the past slavery period to 1920. In this period activists like Sojourner Truth and many others called for attention to issues of black women and laid down ideas and principles that later became the foundation stone of black feminism. The main and the most important issue during this period was the suffrage movement that is for the Right to Vote. The black women demanded suffrage which would give them some sort of protection from the sexist and racist society however the white women demanded the right to education.

Secondly, from 1920 to 1960, the black feminist theory or black feminism became more prominent due to the Civil rights movement and the feminist movement. These movements were dominated by white women and narrowed their movement only for the Welfare of white women. This hypocrisy and injustice paved the path for black women to join the Communist Party that promised them providing equality irrespective of class Race or sex. During this period only ether V Cooper and Claudia Jones Road scholarly articles talked of Domestic social religious as well as financial issues of black women.

Lastly, 1960, is provided a booster that the black feminist required. They got political support and social recognition and demanded complete liberation from all kinds of suffering. Consequently in 1970 and 1980 is they formed their separate groups which would raise the issues of black women by putting forward Black Nationalism through is and gay nationalism.

Now to spread all the theories and ideas of the mass is the black feminist needed some sort of weapon. This they got in the form of language. Language became artillery for redefining and reforming the lives of black women. The feminist started writing about all these social prejudices in their language so that they can reach the masses. Fortunately, it worked and the message to rise against these injustices spread far and wide. One must think that black feminism theory came into existence only in the 20th century. But it had already gotten bigger in 1851 when Sojourner Truth delivered her speech *Ain't I a Woman* at women's convention in Akron Ohio.



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She explains in detail how feminism was fruitful only for white women and the black women issues remain on notice underneath these so-called feminist theories.

Chapter-II

Since then many other Scholars writers like Ida B, Zora Neal Hurston, Anna Julia Cooper, and many more continued to highlight the issues of black women. Issues discuss that the black women had to face a more reality e of racism other than the sexist oppression. They were compelled to be silent and silently accept sexual inferiority. Bell hooks' book *Ain't I a woman: black women and feminism* published in 1982 also discusses these issues.

Other issues include being deprived of basic human rights. They were treated as slaves to serve their economic and household needs. Mostly they were seen as objects of entertainment and forced to indulge in the physical pleasures of the masters.

They were economically and socially weaker and always put at the bottom of the list. They were always marginalized. These black women also redefine Motherhood. Although the slave trade had been abolished these black women were compelled by the slave holding classes to reproduce as many children as possible to fulfill the requirements of fieldwork. They were treated as child production machines and not mothers..

Black feminists throughfeminist literary sources spread all these issues among the other black men and women and do uplifting their condition in the world. The fight still goes on but now they have a platform, they have the power and most importantly they have unity to prevent such oppression from happening again.

Black feminist finds little to say about race. These are some black women authors who presented the life of a female as a slave in his own man's hand. They show that "because of sexual oppression, domestic tasks, black women suffered in more ways than black men" (Smith 1983). Arrieta Jacob's "incident in the life of a Slave Girl (1861)", states its goal as to arouse the women of the north (Baker 1991:21). other women novelists were Harriet bee Stowe, who published "Uncle Tom's Cabin in 1852" and Harriet Wilson who published the Autobiographical novel *Our Nig* or sketches from the life of a free Black in a two-story White House, North in 1859 which is also considered as the first novel published by a black America in the United States(Bell:2004:95).

Lucy by a female poet w the only one Ballad Bars Fight. Other notable poets during this age were Ada (Sarah L. Fortens pen name) and Frances E.W. Harper. Among these poets, the earliest black woman author is the order and civil rights activist sojourner truth. Sojourner truth was unable to read to write yet she was one of the talented deliver of speeches the most famous of which was given at the 1851 women's rights convention in Akron Ohio and became known later as *Ain't a Woman?*

During the post-reconstruction period an outstanding woman writer was certainly Ida B. Wells- Barnett, political voice and journalist among allies. She was among Booker T Washington and William E.B. Du Bois who wrote and talked about the direction and strategies of African American political economic and social progress. They are hereby were especially stress activists and resistant to the "separate but equal" ideology, which was made legal by the 1896 Supreme Court decision. From 1894 onwards, the National Association of colored women established publishing their magazine women's era. The period between 1890 and 1910 is often referred to with that same name as it was the period of the highest cultivator of female authors. Lucy Delaney published from darkness cometh the light it for struggles for freedom in 1891; Frances E.W. Harper *lolaLeroy*; *Shadows* uplifted the first Afro American novel to treat the heroism of blacks during and after the Civil War (Bell, 1987: 58), in 1892 and Anna Julia Cooper published a voice from the South by black women of the South in the same year.

In this women's Era black women were especially well situated to analyze and offer solutions to sexist society's justices because of their position as women in a sexist society and as black people in a racist society. (Norton Anthology of African American literature, 1997: 554). Womanhood, a vital element in the regeneration and progress of a race, claimed that the education and elevation of black women are

crucial to racial uplift (Norton anthology of African American literature, 1997: 554). As women are the ones in charge of the education of the next generation.

However, until 1914 black women were written confronting negative images of black women. Pauline Hopkins heroine in contending forces 1900 wanted to advance the race. Zora Neale Hurston tries to project positive images of women in her novels but the hostile surroundings left no impact in reality. Lutie, Johnson in Ann Petry's *The Street* 1946 and *The Cleo* in West's, *The Living Easy* became frustrated and destructive and alienated from themselves. With Gwendolyn Brooks, *Maud Martha* (1953) saw a Shift in African American fiction. The focus here is more on the process of self-definition. Paul Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstone* (1959) was influenced by Brooks Martha. Marshall's work is a landmark in black women's fiction. The book deals with the theme of the life of a black mother and daughter. The image of black women between even more complexes with a shift of black women to the north.

From cotton pickers and cooks, they became garment factory workers. In this Era the works of Ann Petri and Zora Neale Hurston were instrumental. Their writings influence writers like Brook and Marshall. Both of whom focus on the black community. They made aware to the writers of 60 of the importance of community in developing one's own identity. They made several writers aware that the hostility of patriarchal attitudes between black women and men had larger links with the capitalists and racism. With this new perspective on the blacks, the attitudes of their community changed. The stereotypical racial notions that affected blacks could be seen in Toni Morrison's *the bluest eye* and Alice Walker's *the Third Life of Grange Copeland*. These novels show the negative aspect of communities that were affected directly and became responsible for black tragedies.

The 1970s and 80s were seen as a threat to the black community. The works of black women were seen as a protest against the sexist and racist attitude in society. Just as the whites had changed, blacks need to change too. Toni Morrison's *Songs of Solomon* (1978). Gloria Naylor's *The Women Brewster Street* (1980), Tony Cade Bambara's *The Salt Eaters* (1980), Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), Joyce Carol Thomas's *Marked By Fire*, Paul Marshall *Praise Song For The Widow* (1983) how black women lives were affected by sexism and racism.

Objective of the Study The present work aims to study and discuss the rise of Black Feminism.

Conclusion In 1901 lot of fiction by Black women have been appeared the novels of black feminist mainly deals with the theme of Identity which expresses itself in the form of a journey. As one Walker's *the color purple* the journey of Celie's is from the light of an ignorant girl to a life of an educated to a speaking subject. Entrapment, images of powerlessness, helplessness, restricted mobility. The theme of lesbians was another important characteristic of black women's writing. However black women strive to gain respect and dignity amidst the flashpoints of the intersections of race and gender. Surviving whole, therefore, becomes a corollary for black women.

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