

### **Racial Oppression in The Novels of Alice Walker**

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**Abstract:** - In addition to being female, the characters in Walker's writings are mostly defined by the color of their skin. Even though ethnicity shouldn't play such a significant role in defining an individual, racism is sadly still a major issue. In addition to the inevitable sexual discrimination they experience, African American women also contend with prejudice based on race daily. Racism is encountered by the ladies in Alice Walker's writings at a very young age, and it has a significant impact on them. It is frequently the cause of their anxieties and insecurities, keeping children from growing up to be strong and self-sufficient, entangling them in the bonds of race, and leaving them permanently scarred by a part of their existence that they cannot alter. That is the exact reason why a great number of people make an effort to escape it, to flee from their history and customs, in the hopes of being able to fit in with the largely white society that nevertheless, even in this day of advancement, tends to despise those who are different.

**Keywords:** - Individuality, Racism, sexual discrimination, African American women and white people's attitudes.

**Introduction:** - African American female author and English novelist Alice Walker wrote novels. The feminist Alice Walker addresses the subjugation of African American men and women. In addition to providing a vivid picture of black life in America at the time, the three novels are fundamentally connected both narrative and philosophy. The three novels document a shared experience. They disclose how White people's attitudes have shaped America into what it is today: a place of unparalleled glory.

However dim these recollections may be, Africa, the home of his ancestors, cannot completely vanish from their consciousness. They have a particular place in their hearts and spirits for Africa. Although America occupies their conscious brains, Africa remains ingrained in their subconscious minds. Their past is a protracted narrative spanning two continents. They were expelled from their own culture, religion, and history. They have a whole page in African history, whereas American history has only a small, thin margin. But their story spanning two continents is not a dream of a July night. It is a tale of an unending, excruciating hallucination. But they're still holding onto hope. They see this never-ending pain delusion as a form of liberation that allows them to replenish their vitality.

To fully comprehend this, one must read Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Literary works such as spirituals, dramas, short tales, novels, jazz, blues, and poetry capture the essence of the black American psyche. Their existence is marginal. However, it has recently shown the essence of optimism. "We will triumph eventually." We are currently seeing a remarkable global display of women's liberation movements. It is an international phenomenon that affects all nations, civilizations, racial groups, and faiths. Feminist writing is being produced by female authors in India as well. In terms of numbers, women do not belong to any marginalized or minority groups. In our nation, women make up 50% of the population. But in a world ruled by men, women everywhere do not enjoy equal status or personal respect. They become socially, politically, sexually, and culturally marginalized as a result.

In the end, social, political, and economic exploitation results from their sexual exploitation. Women from marginalized groups in society, such as Dalits and Adivasis, experience double the injustice, double the exploitation, and double the unfairness. There is a twofold risk involved. They experience dehumanization as well as degradation. Their marginality stems from their gender. They also experience domestic abuse. Wives and husbands are not equal partners in the home. If not, masculine lust would have taken the lives of women. Nevertheless, they endure a great deal of suffering at the hands of humans. Feminism addresses each of these issues. We discuss women's empowerment a lot. The only ways to empower them are by equality, work, and education. Women's nude bodies and souls are a concern for women writers. Religion, culture, and social structure have all been exploited by the male-dominated

world to keep women in servitude. In actuality, human rights violations affect every marginalized and oppressed group of people, and if they are not fiercely opposed, they eventually result in dehumanization.

Alice Walker addressed the issue of sexism at a time when the majority of other black writers claimed that racism was the root of all African Americans' problems. Her writings address not only the issues faced by Black women but also the prospect of advancement, even if it comes gradually. The tale of Black women's enslavement as slaves and their subsequent evolution bears some similarities to the Phoenix story. The evolution of women bears some similarities to the Phoenix narrative. Despite going through hardship and suffering, they were able to redefine who they were. Because of the cultural renaissance of the 1960s, writers' attitudes underwent a noticeable shift.

Walker also emphasized how important black women were to the history of African Americans and how important they were to the country's current social and political advancements. Their books always examine how racism, sexism, and classism interact to negatively impact the lives of African American women. In America, at least, race, gender, and class are not distinct categories; rather, they are intimately related. According to Barbara Christian, despite these aspects' constantly changing appearance, they are so inherently linked like the pictures in a kaleidoscope that it is necessary to comprehend how they work together (Walker, 79). The terrible circumstances that African-Americans endured while living in white America are symbolized by racism, misogyny, and classism. Black people, regardless of sex, have known about racism's harsh realities since the days of enslavement. Women belonged to a different caste based solely on their sex, much as black people as a whole were caste-bound according to their race. Nonetheless, a class-based standard of women was established inside the separate caste. The idealized portrayal of the southern lady from the eighteenth century has had a significant impact on how Americans perceive women in this nation. Not only was she ornamentally lovely, but she was also expected to be chaste, devoted, married, and eventually a mother. It was evident that she was a wealthy, attractive, white woman who was unemployed.

Furthermore, black women rarely resembled the standard because they were perceived as lower class under their race: They were not beautiful in this country's eyes, they had to work, and the majority of them were unable to be decorative or secluded from the outside world. However, they weren't males either. Any intellectual or confrontational behavior on their part qualities required for engagement in the workforce was viewed as impolite and unwomanly (Walker, 72). African women were thus unable to fulfill the ideal of femininity while also being physiologically female and subject to all the social constraints that accompanied that status. As a result, experiencing both overt gender bias and racial discrimination is a double burden for Black women.

Perhaps no other social group has witnessed such a depressing display of human depravity and debasement. African women experienced racism because they were black; as women, they were subjected to sexual abuse by white patriachs; additionally, because they were black and slaves, the white establishment made their lives on meager wages and kept them in poverty. In summary, racism, sexism, and classism combined to put black women in America at triple risk. Racism and sexism are related and coexist as means of oppressing Black people. Black women have faced significant obstacles in their pursuit of social, political, and economic advancement, forcing them to struggle even to meet basic needs. Slave women's backs and minds were disfigured by sexism and its attendant horrors, which also soiled their sexuality and permanently damaged their mental health. Her story thus involves the dangers of straddling the Charybdis of sexism and the Scylla of racism, even in contemporary America. The practice of female circumcision is one more egregious instance of traditional brutality among the black community, and it is a very unpleasant memory. Walker was never able to let go of it. She addresses this subject in *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992), which has

important life lessons. This book's story revolves around Tashi, an African tribal woman who has undergone harmonic circumcision.

Throughout a selection of Walker's works, which may be considered powerfully biographical, the concept of the multilayered unfairness of Black women in the American man-controlling community was explored. Being an African American woman, the author has gone above and beyond what any contemporary American writer has done to show the extent of the suffering endured by black American women at the hands of harshness. While the majority of Black American writers believed that bigotry was the root of all Black Americans' suffering, Walker was the leading Black American woman writer who took into account all the issues facing Black American women in the US, particularly sexism. The *Colour Purple* addressed a wide range of issues, including bondage, culture, customs, sexism, racism, gender bias, and the treatment of women (Mirshojaei, 2016). Regarding the white man's dominance over the woman in "Hurstons Hero in Janie's story," he represents the common generalization and outright rejection of black women's rights. The white man views women as nothing more than objects made to satisfy sensual desires. In these kinds of books, Nanny is both concerned about and fascinated by the rape and abuse of Black women. Safety takes precedence above attachment, as evidenced by the Nanny's persistent efforts to get Janie to wed Logan Killicks to end the romantic abuse of white men in her memories. Walker reportedly tries to create a situation where she may avoid seeing her as she had previously (Farda & Zarrinjooee, 2014).

The diversity of black women began when white men began to engage in rape. Nanny, a black woman, was upset by this troubling disregard for the pride of black American women both inside and outside of the plantation. As previously disclosed, Nanny gave birth to Leafy after being sexually assaulted by a white man, and she now tells her granddaughter what transpired with the mother. A black woman living in a predominantly white environment may always expect to be sexually harassed and raped by a white guy. This woman is viewed by the white man as a sexual object of desire. Rape is the outcome of black women's education.

The irony lies in the fact that Nanny Hopes Leafy forgets her lesson and then finds herself the focus of the white man's attention. At last, she fled her mother's home to avoid the shame and pain she experienced after being sexually assaulted (Fard & Zarrinjooee, 2014). According to Mirshojaei (2016), the piece *Meridian* offers an example of the author's capacity to bring together political and personal stories. Even in Walker's main book, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, the activities change over time. "Meridian" is positioned through a little segment that, as Walker portrays it, shapes the piece too much like the pieces of cloth that make up the cover. Furthermore, *Meridian* seems to support other issues that depend more on private contact than on a general directive. *Meridian* took accountability for the events. She was not in a rush to witness the truth. She only mentioned that she would only have one chance to win and that it was time to seize it. Some claim that this study exposes the methods used to inflict injustice on women. The work does not offer a modest but fair series of questions that compel one to learn from their past experiences and difficult situations (Mirshojaei, 2016). There is a desire to include Sharma and Dwivedi's perspectives in their fiction in this chapter. They declared that to be respected for their ideas, the woman had to upload the sound. Additionally, they acknowledged and depicted the tragedy, hardship, and conundrum that black migrants in America face. Walker explores a variety of topics in her books by illustrating the extent of the racism faced by her African American characters in the United States and how they gradually gained more strength to break free from their parents and communities (Sharma & Dwivedi, 2017).

The best way to define racism is to say that people of a particular race believe they are fundamentally superior to people of other ethnicities. Racism is portrayed in "The Colour Purple" as a white opponent battling a

deceitful, black demon; individuals who exhibit this aggressiveness are also victims of some form of cruelty. When Mr. says that he is disheartened by Sofia's struggle, Alphonso's kid strikes his wife. Nothing can produce that well, according to Walker more than the thrashing of a moral voice. The public near him and his family were handled in a similar way to how his autocratic parent treated them. Racism is frequently compared to a birdcage in art, where white men mistreat black women. The jail of Sofia alludes symbolically to the ways that black women are imprisoned by racism and how they are constrained to oppression and family life within their own homes (Abdulimam & Yasir, 2015).

The way to deal with this isolation in "Meridian" was to localize on damaging stereotypes and ethnic prejudice. Alice's Meridian portrays the prejudice that black women have against white people who had first humiliated them and then enslaved them. This was done to illustrate how resentment based on race can lead to further animosity. The welfare of a female girl is also of little worth in dark values, since women are not important. A young girl who becomes ill is not transported to the hospital, according to Kutlu, a nurse. She is a girl, they remarked. If God so chooses, he will shield her (Kutlu, 222). She grew up a stupid and deaf little child. Girls are frequently the target of their fathers' rage and are singled out for absurd causes as insignificant kids. Prenatal sex is dedicated in some countries and is always done with the consent of male offspring, which is one of the main causes of racism against women. Ninety percent of pregnancies known to have been conceived from boy embryos ended in normal delivery, compared to thirty percent of confinements known to have contained entire girl embryos. Pregnant women who gave birth to a girl baby were sometimes ignored or even punished, but those who gave birth to a boy were highly prized.

Kutlu writes in *The Unfinished Story of Mademoiselle Dimitra* However Nadya Hamm gives birth to her fifth daughter, and how her husband beats her violently for all of her daughters' births. However, Nadya's husband held a ceremony and gave her several gifts when she eventually gave birth to a boy (Kutlu, 54). Prenatal sex assortment is not recognized in American and European cultures, and Walker's CP did not make this clear (Kutlu, 2003). Sofia suffers as a result of the officer's retaliation against her after she turned down his offer to watch his children. She received a 20-year prison sentence.

She receives harsh punishment and humiliation in prison They break her ribs and head. On one side, they rend her nose loose. They cause one-eye blindness in her (Walker, 1985). Walker's blind eye can be observed in Sofia's eye. Walker lost her vision in a childhood injury. She believes that this accident was deliberate because her brother was in charge of the situation. Several novels feature this eye as a recurring, ordinary occurrence (Walker, 2010). After being transported from the jail to the officer's home, Sofia helped Squeaks and Celie with their labors by serving his children as a servant. During her early years, Walker experienced racial persecution as well. She thus made a serious commitment to fighting for the emancipation of women and black people. In society, their voices are disregarded and undervalued. Compared to other groups, they are less visible since they are viewed as interchangeable and indistinguishable from one another (Amanda K, 357). Black women's presence is less noticeable than that of white women and black males, however, they are still there. Because they receive different treatment than others and feel alienated because of their gender and ethnicity, they are less identifiable.

Walker could sympathize with black American ladies since she was a black American who endured racial discrimination and was the daughter of a sharecropper. She so fearlessly opposes this kind of subjugation of African American women and battles valiantly to preserve her culture. Gender is not the same as sex; women are subjected to gender roles by a patriarchal society, which views men as active and women as submissive. Indeed, the root of all other oppressions and injustices is gender inequality. Different countries face different threats to women from the

domination of functions controlled by men. As a result, a woman's concerns depend on her nationality, caste, religion, gender, and ethnicity. But while women and men both fight for their rights and dignity, gender inequality is the main problem that seriously impedes women's ability to express who they are.

In addition to being female, the characters in Walker's writings are mostly defined by the color of their skin. Even though ethnicity shouldn't play such a significant role in defining an individual, racism is sadly still a major issue. In addition to the inevitable sexual discrimination they experience, African American women also contend with prejudice based on race daily. Racism is encountered by the ladies in Alice Walker's writings at a very young age, and it has a significant impact on them. Black women must learn to fight and stand together, refusing to allow life to bring them to their knees because they are marginalized and mistrusted by the white people in their immediate environment. Most of the time, it is challenging since Walker frequently presents characters who have suffered greatly as a result of the bigotry and misogyny they must endure. However, they gradually pick up survival skills like fighting and self-defense. They have a difficult and rocky journey towards emancipation, but they persevere because, in the end, they emerge as courageous, strong women.

Both male and female characters are impacted by racism, but how males respond to it frequently has an impact on how they interact with women. Because they perceive women as inferior to males, they take out their frustrations and anger on their wives and daughters, feeling hatred all around them. Walker's first book, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, illustrates this point. In it, the character of Grange, as well as his son Brownfield, annoys his entire family because they find it difficult to deal with how white people treat them. Walker examines the intricacies of the connections between racism, gender inequality, and poverty in the life of the Copelands, a black sharecropping family in the South, in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (Christian, 5). He concludes that the discrimination he encounters cannot damage family ties and attempts to atone for his actions by shielding Ruth, his granddaughter. In *Love and Trouble* chronicles the everyday experiences of women who suffer from such heinous acts of physical assault.

Author Walker helps us understand this man's violence towards these three women in his family by pointing out that it stems from deep internal chaos, parts of which include his helpless anger towards the white world that mistreats him, his flimsy love for his child, and the fact that both he and his sister chose to be with white men (Christian, 93– 94). However, the reason behind his actions does not in any way excuse them; rather, it illustrates how the hatred and discrimination experienced by African Americans as a whole frequently leads to additional violent outbursts from individuals who believe they are superior to those who are perceived as inferior within the already maltreated race, i.e., men against women. *The Colour Purple*, a film about African Americans, effectively illustrates the repercussions of racial discrimination against them by depicting the various forms of oppression that female characters face. Within the group of individuals subjected to racial oppression, women experience discrimination not just from white people but also from their spouses and men. They are viewed as weak and unproductive, having no value without a male to support them.

Men are taught that they must beat their wives to get them to obey them, and this type of violence is frequently the outcome of men experiencing oppression and being denigrated by White people. males, whether white or black, feel the same way about women when they are in front of males. The only other female character in the book who decides to fight from the start is Sofia. Sofia's legendary unwillingness to submit to the double discourse that white civilization requires of Black people is the true test of her power (Berlant, 2000: 12).

**CONCLUSION:** - Walker is effective in highlighting the suffering and hardships faced by Black women. In Walker's writings, African American characters struggle with racial prejudice, sexual abuse, gender bigotry, and patriarchal norms. Furthermore, Walker is a crucial feminist author who is the foremost writer on forbidden topics like incest because she wants to reveal to the public the complex realities of the existence of a black African woman. As a writer of black feminist literature, Alice presented a black philosophy as a contemporary genre in the patriarchal American society, particularly in the South of America.

Additionally, she effectively showed in what way both racism and gender act as a trigger for injustice versus African American ladies. Through chosen books by Walker, the current study investigates the multi-level marginalization of black women in the dominant culture. Walker's main goal is to draw attention to the racial oppression and injustice that African American women experience. As a result, she skillfully depicts how her black female characters have consistently rebelled against oppression, encouraging other women to do the same and live free lives. However, I won't allow him to defeat me before I kill him (Walker, 41).

On the other hand, society ought to value the distinctiveness of African American women and support them in pursuing their creative endeavors. Every woman in Walker's book is a creative who expresses her ideas through songs, gardening, and quilts (Majid, 215). Walker tells the tale of her ancestors, who, in the face of such turmoil and injustice meted out to them, discovered their identity and creative expression. Having finally succeeded in identifying who they were, they were able to appreciate their influence and worth in society. Walker thought that the black community could not struggle against the white supremacist system for equal chances and rights if it was split and subjugated. But for African Americans to realize their ambitions, they must learn to understand one another, and black men's violence against black women needs to end. It is impossible to expect racial harmony unless the prejudice against black women by black men is eliminated. Walker concurs, saying that for black women to successfully fight for their rights in the face of the racial system, black males need to get to know them and become their pillars of support. This essay then examines the metamorphosis of Walker's black female heroine, analyzing how she was repressed and rejected by society as well as her eventual recognition and realization of her actual identity. Numerous humiliations and forms of oppression beset African American women on their journey towards self-realization. Black women must first embrace who they are, recognize their actual selves and skills, and work towards their goals to break free from these terrible grips. Self-realization hence promotes a reciprocal interaction with society and the black counterpart.

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