

## From Servitude to Sovereignty: Celie's Evolution in Alice Walker's 'The Color Purple'.

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**Abstract:**The current research is explicitly devoted to Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Color Purple*, which is a celebration of African-American female sovereignty following a long journey of male oppression, sexism, and slavery. The present study operates under the Black feminist literary criticism approach; it highlights the role of profound female relationships in the life of Celie, a poor uneducated sexually abused black girl who finds the strength to emancipate herself from the evils of patriarchy and sexism with the help of the special women in her life. Alice Walker makes her female readers live a transformational cycle with subtleties to encourage them to take the initial move towards their freedom from male supremacy.

**Keywords:** Alice Walker; Black Feminist Criticism; *The Color Purple*; Oppression; Sovereignty,

**Résumé:**Cette recherche est simplement désignée pour étudier le roman d'Alice Walker *The Color Purple* qui a gagné le Pulitzer Prize. Ce roman célèbre la souveraineté Africo-Américaine féminine suivant une longue histoire de l'oppression de l'homme, le sexisme, l'esclavage. Cette étude opère l'approche littéraire féminine noire. L'étude examine le profond rôle des relations féminines de Célie, la pauvre fille négro inculte et sexuellement abusé qui a trouvé la vigueur pour se libérer de mauvais patriarcat et du sexisme à l'aide des femmes. Alice Walker a fait sa lectrices vivre le cercle de transformation avec des subtilités pour les encourager à faire le premier pas vers leur libération de la suprématie masculine.

**Mots-clés :** Alice Walker ; littéraire Féminine Noire; *The Color Purple*; Oppression; souveraineté

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Being both black and female in early twentieth-century American society had its predicaments. Oppression, abuse, racism, sexism, and inequality were, unfortunately, women's companions at that time. In searching for freedom and equality, female Afro-American writers devoted their art in the service of the silenced oppressed black women. Alice Walker, along with many other black American writers enriched Afro-American literature with their riveting and practical approaches. Walker is a contemporary writer and a Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist who raised burning issues of racism, sexism, and slavery in her novels, short stories, and essays.

Walker coined the term Womanism as a theory based on the discovery of Second Wave Feminism in regards to the history and experiences of black women. Walker's most ground-breaking novel *The Color Purple* functions as a representation of what happens to women within the black community, the novel deals with the issues of racism and sexism, it pulls together Walker's ideas about women's life and culture through presenting the socio-historical picture of the rural South of twentieth-century America with the help of the womanist characters who portray solidarity, love, and independence.

Walker allows every Afro-American woman to identify with one of her main female characters, as she presented four different women; each one with her past and own thinking but all of them relate differently to the leading character of the story. This paper attempts to pursue how Walker was able to portray the evolution of her major character, Celie, from being a sexually abused child to living as a passive abused wife and finally flourished to a liberated independent woman. In addition, the researcher will explore the effect of the female relationships on Celie's emancipation journey.

To discover how Celie's transformation from a 'suspended women' unable to alter her submissive state to a 'liberated women' who recovers her true identity and builds a new life for herself, the current study operates

under the black feminist criticism approach, the latter denotes the representation of African- American females and uncovers destructive female stereotypes embedded in literary works written by both black men and women. The approach also investigates how such texts contribute to the consciousness of females in this case Celie's mindfulness of her abilities and being conscious about wanting to triumph her obstructions.

Showalter (1981) in her essay *Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness* addresses the importance of granting women accesses to language in order to be able to convey their thoughts in a strong, unobstructed style, she states: "The appropriate task for feminist criticism is to concentrate on women's access to language, on the available lexical range from which words can be selected, on the ideological and cultural determinants of expression. The problem is not that language is insufficient to express women's consciousness but that women have been denied the full resources of language and have been forced into silence, euphemism, or circumlocution". (p. 183)

*The Color Purple* is a womanist account of the life of an oppressed black woman authored by a black woman; the novel is one of the best African-American literary works for it conveys all concerns of the Black Feminist Movement. It was constituted to show the ways sexism; racism and classicism influence the lives of the Black women whose needs were ignored by the Black men, the Black Liberation Movement and White women in the Women's Movement. BlackFeministcriticismincorporates an analysis of the way race, class, sexuality as well as gender influence women's lives, as suggested by Tyson the ultimate goal of any feminist activity either feminist theory or feminist literary criticism is changing the world through endorsing women's equality (2006, p.92).

## **2. About the Novel: The Color Purple**

Winner of 1983 both the National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize for fiction, *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker first published in 1982 is considered as one of the best feminist or womanist works in modern African-American literature. Walker discusses gender and racial

discrimination, racism, sexism, patriarchy, and all kinds of oppression that African-American females faced during the first half of the twentieth century. Due to the uniqueness of the novel, it was adapted into a film in 1985 by Steven Spielberg starring some of the best African-American actresses, from Whoopi Goldberg, Oprah Winfrey to Margaret Avery among others.

*The Color Purple* is described as a bildungsroman novel written in the epistolary form; Nelson (2015) in his book *Ethnic American Literature, An Encyclopedia for Students* says: “The Color Purple is ostensibly an epistolary novel; it also contains elements of the epic, romance, realist and bildungsroman tradition.” (p.506). The novel is a collection of letters that begins with Celie writing letters to God and ends with letters from and to her sister Nettie. The letters offer a vivid depiction of the oppression, sexual abuse, alienation, and victimization that African-American women suffer from.

When published, the novel was celebrated by numerous critics; Anna Clark (2007) appraised Alice Walker for devising an epistolary novel in a unique way that it did not deviate from the norms and values of the traditional African-American literature (p.1). Harris honored the novel stating that: “To complain about the novel is to commit treason against black women writers” (1984, p.155), Andrea Ford (1988) says in the Detroit Free Press, —Walker has succeeded in creating a jewel of a novel.”(p.35), she continues to celebrate the novel’s supremacy which she identifies as the power of Love to redeem and killmeanness of the world.

By way of contrast, the novel received a fair share of attacks for its harsh representation of African-American males; Philip Royster blames Walker for —the depiction of violent black men who physically and psychologically abuse their wives and children... [and for the] depiction of lesbianism.¶ (Royster, 1986, p.347).According to Böttcher:

*The Color Purple* has been criticized exactly for lacking those obvious features Walker did not like to see African-American writing being reduced to: blacks and whites as opponents. The criticism of her novel

was even stronger because at the same time Walker showed a picture of black males that is far from “flattery”. (2003, p.4)

Abend-David (1999) had a different reading to *The Color Purple*, according to him the critics who censured Walker were unable to thoroughly examine the different layers of the novel; he maintained that “The ideological achievement of *The Color Purple* is not...in denouncing a male-dominated society, but in describing the possibilities in the absence of such domination” (p. 19). For her defense, Alice Walker published a collection of essays *In Search Of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1972) to illuminate everyone who censured her; the essay according to Smith (1978) discusses the political, economic and social constraints of slavery and racism with its impacts on the creative lives of black female writers (p. 20).

Christian (1999) acknowledged that she always remembered and treasured Walker's essay when anyone would ask her: what is this black feminist literary critic thing you are trying to become? she also admired Walker's notions of the high and low that turned the complete idea of Art upside down, Walker in her essay asserted that rather than looking high we should look low to all the talented women who never had the chance to establish their Art, beauty and creativity. (p.238)

The novel portrays the cruel life journey of a fourteen-year-old black girl who lives in a male-dominated world, her life experience is a collection of repeated oppression, racism, and sexual abuse. When her mother falls ill and is not able to meet the sexual needs of her husband, the latter sees Celie as her mother's substitute for his demands. Celie is raped by her father Alphonso (who she calls Pa but later in the novel turns out to be her stepfather), he says: “You gonna do what your mammy wouldn't” (Walker, 2011, p.3).

After the death of her mother, Celie is raped over and over again, and she becomes pregnant twice and has two babies who Pa had sold to another family and made her believe they died. Because her stepfather frequently threatens her not to tell anybody about his sexual exploitation he orders: “You better shut up and get used to it” (Walker, 2011, p.3), helpless Celie

only finds comfort in writing letters to God addressing her bewildering life and fate.

Celie is forced to marry Albert, a widowed man with four kids whose first intention was to marry her sister Nettie but Alphonso convinced him to take Celie instead. In her family, she is treated as a slave rather than a wife. After a while, Celie gets used to her new life and starts to build new relationships with the other black women in her life. Celie forms a relationship with Sofia, who is married to Albert's son; however, the most influential relationship in her life is with Shug Avery her husband's mistress. These two relationships along with the only family relationship she has with her sister Nettie are at the heart of Celie's emancipation journey.

### **3. Celie's Journey from Servitude to Sovereignty**

In *the Color Purple*, Celie's emancipation journey undergoes various challenges, before she is transformed into a strong and independent woman; Celie is a young victim to men's oppression, abuse, and exploitation. Walker's idea of Celie's evolution is strongly connected to Walker's ideology of womanism where all African-American women should free themselves from the evils of patriarchy, sexism and create a new powerful identity for themselves, Smith (1982) maintained: "In creating a hero for African-American women, Walker created a hero for others as well" (p.4).

The multi-dimensional female relationships that characterize the novel are Walker's way to help women to relate to one of her different yet powerful female characters, they are also at the core of Celie's liberation journey. Celie was fortunate enough to create strong female ties, some are sisterly some are sexual and others are just simple friendships all of which helped in making a vigorous self-reliant woman.

#### **3.1 Nettie and Celie: Intellectual Growth**

Celie's relationship with her sister Nettie is the first bond of sisterhood and female solidarity in the novel. After the death of her mother, and the journey of violence and abuse she had to go through and the loss of her two children while still being a child herself is what connects Celie to her sister.

Celie feels the need to protect Nettie from their stepfather to prevent her from being his next object.

She encourages Nettie not to abandon school and to have a proper education to be powerful enough not to fall a victim like she did "I tell Nettie to keep at her books."(Walker, 2011, p. 11). Unfortunately, repressed Celie could not find the inner strength to properly protect Nettie as she is forced to marry a widowed man with four kids who initially desires to marry her sister but Alphonso offers Celie instead since she is old for him and he wants a younger fresh victim to sexually abuse and Nettie is next in line.

The strong bond between Celie and Nettie is mirrored through the overpowering love and safeguarding that both sisters have for each other. They create a haven full of psychological support to escape the cruel household environment they are part of. Due to the absence of parental guidance and affection, the two sisters find solace in one another. To Celie, Nettie is her daughter who feels a constant urge to protect and support; mainly because of the loss of her two children. Celie's motherly love is directed towards her sister to fill the emptiness of her lost children. However, in reality, it is Nettie who supports and encourages Celie. She helps her with reading, spelling, and everything she thinks Celie needs to know.

Nettie is heavily influenced by her teacher Miss Beasley who supports her to build her own strong and rebellious identity that Nettie tries to channel to her sister. She stayed with Celie for a while after she escaped the abuse of her stepfather, when Nettie witnessed the brutal savage beating Celie bears from her husband and the mistreatment of his kids, she presses her to fight back and not let them run over her "Don't let them run over you, Nettie says. You got to let them know who got the upper hand."(Walker, 2011, p. 19).

Alice Walker portrays female solidarity and strong family ties between the two sisters. She embodies Nettie as the first mentor of Celie, her first rock to build a powerful- respective self. Nettie always believed

Celie to be an intelligent woman who was deprived of her right to proper education only because she was pregnant after being a victim of sexual exploitation.

The first time I got big Pa took me out of school. He never cares. That I love it. Nettie stood there at the gate holding tight to my hand. I was all dress for the first day. You too dumb to keep going to school, Pa says. Nettie is clever in this bunch. But Pa, Nettie say, crying, Celie smart too. Even Miss Beasley says so. Nettie dote on Miss Beasley. Think nobody like her in the world..., (Walker, 2011, p. 19).

Nettie made sure to educate and enlighten her sister and forced her to read and write in order not to be illiterate and to have a chance in life like everyone else. Unfortunately, Nettie's stay at Albert's house did not last long and Celie lost her tower of strength, the only person who cared and supported her. Nettie was forced to leave the house when she refused to accept being sexually abused by him. Celie was too afraid to take her sister's advice and fight back; she did not hear anything from Nettie for a long time and in the beginning, she lost hope and assumed her to be dead.

Celie always believed that resistance will lead her to the same fate as her sister "I think bout Nettie, dead. She fights, she runs away. What good does it do? I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive."(Walker, 2011, p. 20). These distressed words coming from a young woman too afraid to fight back her egotistic abusive husband are Walker's way to shed light on the meaningless life of almost all African-American females in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century society, they fail to oppose any violent and savage men in their lives as they are too afraid to die or they have been mistreated for a very long time so they believe it is the normal way things should be. The luxury of having a voice to speak out against racism, sexism, and oppression was sadly unobtainable for Celie, the only voice she had was in the form of letters diverted towards God.

Years go by, and hope finds its way back to Celie's life after she finds letters from her sister that her husband has hidden from her. Celie gives up writing letters to God and starts writing to Nettie, who lives in Africa "I



don't write to God no more I write to you" (Walker, 2011, p. 199). Their relationship grew deeper through writing, the only means of communication the two sisters had. Though being on a different continent somehow, Nettie continues to educate Celie. In her correspondence, Nettie reports to Celie everything she learned in Africa and Europe for instance, the first human in the world being black and that Africans had a more advanced civilization than Europeans. Celie's confidence and passion for life are restored as she finds out that her two lost children were adopted by the missionaries that Nettie lives with, "...Now I know Nettie alive I begin to strut a little bit. Think, when she come home us leave here. Her and me and our two children..." (Walker, 2011, p. 138).

The distant relationship between the two sisters had a prominent influence on Celie's self-educational journey and her transformation journey from subordination towards independence as Nettie accentuates the merit of education and having the knowledge to have a voice, to be independent, fearless, and a liberated woman in a male-dominated society. Walker's representation of Celie's quest for selfhood is a clear delineation of the perception of otherness through her ability to relate various aspects of Celie's life to other Black women's sufferings and deprivation. Smith finds that the unifying bond between black women is through their friendships, their love, and their shared oppression that they collectively gain the strength to separate themselves from the bondage of their past and piece together a free and equal existence for themselves and for those they love (1982, p.182).

### **3.2 Sofia and Celie: Power Recognition**

Another influential character that took part in Celie's emancipation journey is Sofia Butler her step-son's wife. Their relationship represents the bond of friendship in the novel. Sofia's character is completely different from that of Celie's; she is a fierce self-reliant woman mainly because she was born in a family of men and fighting was the only way she could survive "All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers; I had to fight my cousins and my uncles. A girl child ain't safe in a family of men" (Walker, 2011, p. 38).

Celie first admired Sofia for her physical appearance, “They be just marching hand in hand like going to war. She in front a little [...] she not quite as tall as Harpo but much bigger, and strong and ruddy looking, like her mama brought her up on pork [...] (Walker, 2011, p. 30) and for being black and fearless after asking Albert for his permission to marry Harpo his son when he rejects and insults her for being pregnant; at Celie’s astonishment Sofia does not submit and she marries Harpo despite his father’s rejection “she stands up, big, strong, healthy, girl, she say, Naw, Harpo, you stay here. When you free, I and the baby be waiting” (Walker, 2011, p. 38). This act of rebellion is Walker’s way of rejecting the subjugated social rules and humiliating environment black women are forced to be part of.

Sofia’s strong and independent character was able to break the stereotyped image of women that Celie had her entire life. She fights back anyone who mistreats her either physically, emotionally, or sexually especially her husband; she did not accept to be empowered by him, nor to be the obedient wife, housekeeper, and sexual object as expected from every colored woman at the time, however, the act of fighting back your abusive husband is not accepted in a society ruled by men.

The relationship between these two contradictory spirits of Celie and Sofia begins by jealousy, moves towards admiration and ends with idealizing all African- American females who are confident, strong, and independent regardless of the unforgiving circumstances they go through in a society in which women were supposed to be subordinate and dependent on men.

Sofia’s contribution to Celie’s sovereignty begins after the incident in where Sofia finds out that Celie encouraged Harpo to beat her mainly since she is regularly driven to believe that colored women’s mission in life is to serve men with no chance to object or claim their rights. Celie deems Sofia’s actions towards her husband as unacceptable and does not meet the standard actions of submission black women are familiar with, therefore she urges

him to beat her, Sofia confronts Celie and threatens her saying she loves Harpo but she will kill him if he beats her again and if Celie does not want a dead son in law she should stop advising him to beat his wife (Walker, 2011, p. 38).

Celie admits being jealous of Sofia for being black and daring and for doing what Celie dreamed to do her entire life "I say it cause I'm jealous of you. I say it cause you do what I can't" (Walker, 2011, p.38). At this point when Sofia realizes the obedient state of Celie in being silent and only communicates with God through writing, she encourages her to bash Albert's head and think about heaven later (Walker, 2011, p. 38).

Walker depicted female solidarity through the birth of a new close friendship between the two females, and their bond strengthens when Celie stands by her friend after she is imprisoned for twelve years for beating the mayor and his wife when the latter asked her to be her made. When Sofia is finally out of prison she is forced to work at the mayor's house and she is not allowed to see or talk to anyone in her family, yet the only person who supported Sofia and visited her for years is Celie, mainly because she felt she owed Sofia for the encouragement and inspiration she gained from her and the two women remained friends till the end of the story.

### **3.3 Shug Avery and Celie: Sexual Guidance**

Celie's admiration and love for Shug begin when Celie is given a picture of Shug and she sees her as the most beautiful woman in the world yet immediately realizes that both of them are different and come from different worlds but somehow share some kind of suffering expressed through the sadness in Shug's eyes. Walker represented Shug as a model for the ideal African-American woman that Celie and any other broken woman aspires to become; she is beautiful, talented, strong, and independent.

Celie's admiration for Shug lasted for years until she married Albert, and the two women entwined in a multi-layered relationship, Shug Avery's appreciation of Celie, on the other, hand begins when she falls sick, and no

one in town takes care of her except Celie “Dear God, Shug Avery sick and nobody in this town wants to take the Queen Honeybee in. Her mammy says she told her so. Her pappy say, Tramp” (Walker, 2011, p.42).

Celie and Shug’s first encounter was full of conflicting feelings, Celie was delighted and extremely anxious to meet the person she admired and loved for years; however, Shug’s first reaction when she laid eyes on Celie was “You sure is ugly”, like she was told that Celie is ugly but didn’t believe it until she saw her in person (Walker, 2011, p. 43). Celie’s care and nursing for Shug until she is well is what transforms Shug’s feelings towards Celie into admiration and desire to help make her a self-reliant woman.

Even though it was believed that the friendship between Celie and Sofia was the real starting point in Celie’s emancipation journey with Sofia insisting on Celie to break her silence and rebel against the restraining conventions of the male dominating society and to build herself, Celie was unable to do so, and she was not yet able to perceive her own identity and unaware of the notion of the self and the other. Celie's years of oppression from her family and discrimination from the whites engraved unconscious thoughts in her mind that black women are to be accepted as uneducated objects for sexual exploitation, ones with no rights yet with duties. Young Celie's mindset changes as she meets Shug Avery the one person who facilitates her journey in uncovering her true self.

Celie admires Shug Avery for her individuality, self-acceptance, and rebellious-self against the perceptions society had about women. The contradiction of these two characters is Walker’s way to depict the frame of mind that men in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century had about women, Tyson at her *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* highlighted the concept of ‘good girl’ and ‘bad girl’ according to the sexiest patriarchal ideology; she maintains: “patriarchal ideology suggests that there are only two identities a woman can have. If she accepts her traditional gender role and obeys the patriarchal rules, she’s a “good girl”; if she doesn’t, she’s a “bad girl” (2006, p. 89).

According to the patriarchal standards, Celie is a 'good girl' who adheres to the predefined roles of women in society mostly, in being obedient and submissive to men. Shug Avery, on the other hand, was characterized as the 'bad girl', who disobeys the patriarchal rules of her community, one who follows her dream of becoming a singer and does not accept to serve men nor to be submissive to them. This behaviour does not fit the standards of the male dominating world.

Their relationship creates a radical change in Celie's life because Celie feels safer with women she finds solace and cares with Shug Avery that she should have found in her family and with her husband. Walker portrays the growing connection between the two characters through Celie's desire to defend Shug Avery from Albert's father calling her *a Whore*; her helpless act of spitting in his drink represents her first endeavor to create her personal opinion. Shug empowers Celie and gives her the necessary confidence that Celie lacks since she was a child, in her article *We Need a Hero*; Smith (2009) a literary critic highlights: "Celie's relationship with Shug provides her the means through which to confront, challenge and transform the stereotypical myths of female and to ultimately integrate the outer and inner aspects of herself" (p.9).

The first time Celie truly felt respected and empowered is when Shug Avery made her the center of attention and sang a song about her entitled "Miss Celie's Blues" in Harpo's nightclub in front of everyone who ever exploited or mistreated her. "Shug saying, Celie. Miss Celie. And I look up where she at. She says my name again. She says this song I'm about to sing is called Miss Celie's song. Because she scratched it out of my head when I was sick. First, she hums it a little, as she does at home. Then she sing the words" (Walker, 2011, p. 65) This act of gratitude and encouragement from Shug Avery towards Celie made her love Shug even more than she did before because for the first time in her life she was recognized by another woman other than her sister Nettie "first time somebody made something and name it after me" (Walker, 2011, p. 65). Celie was respected and

treated as a person and a woman other than an object; she felt that Shug is the only person who cared about her and her happiness since her sister Nettie left "My life stopped when I left home, I think. But then I think again. It stops with Mr. \_\_\_ maybe, but start up again with Shug. (Walker, 2011, p. 85)

At some point, Shug Avery felt responsible for Celie and refused to leave Albert's house until she made sure that he will never beat Celie again. She pushes her to fight back against anyone who harms her or exploits her. Shug and Celie's relationship takes a different direction when Shug plays Celie's sexual mentor and helps her identify her sexuality, something she is obscure for years. Shug motivates Celie to accept and love all parts of her body, which in a way pushes Celie to accept herself more and to be less alienated than she was.

The major turning point in the novel is when Shug Avery discovered letters from Nettie that Albert has hidden from Celie for years. Celie felt furious and betrayed because she was deprived of the only family member who truly loved her; her feelings were translated into a rebellion something Celie never experienced in her life. She was preparing herself to shave Albert while he was criticizing her. Celie seemed angry and determined to hurt him she wanted to put an end to all these years of oppression and damage that he endures her; fortunately, Shug stops her but could not stop her rebellious new self.

Since Celie was treated as a passive object by all the men in her life, she found it extremely difficult to be an active subject and perceive herself as a human being and a female. Only with the help of other women, Sofia and Shug Avery, Celie finally makes the first step towards self-identification and reconciliation and finds the courage to verbalize her thoughts. The new rebellious Celie decided to leave to Memphis with Shug Avery, but that did not go well with Albert, so for the first time in her life, Celie confronted her husband:

What's wrong now?

You a lowdown dog is what's wrong, I say. It's time to leave you and enter into the Creation. And your dead body is just the welcome mat I need.

Say what? he asked. Shock.

All around the table folks' mouths be dropping open. You took my sister Nettie away from me, I say. And she was the only person who love me in the world.

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ starts to sputter. ButButButButBut. Sound like some kind of motor.

But Nettie and my children coming home soon, I say. And when she do, all us together gonwhup your ass.

Nettie and your children! say Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. You talking crazy.

I got children, I say. Being brought up in Africa. Good schools, lots of fresh air and exercise. Turning out a heap better than the fools you didn't even try to raise. (Walker, 2011, p. 99)

Walker positions Celie and Shug's sexual relationship within the context of her womanist ideology, she defines it as:

Womanist . . . A woman who loves women, sexually and/or non-sexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or non-sexually Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. (Walker, 1983, p. xi)

This delineation labels the exact bond Celie and Shug share. Shug loves Celie as a sister and a woman; hence she made it her mission to help her move from the other toward a real womanist.

For everyone to recognize Celie she needs to recognize herself first as a human being and a woman worthy of respect and appreciation. In the final pages of the novel, Alice Walker was able to depict a completely different character from the one at the opening pages; Celie's journey to self-healing went through various stages and ended with her being the confident independent woman she always aspired to be. She divorced Albert and

moved to Memphis with Shug Avery; her writing and speaking skills developed enormously at the end of the novel, making her an intellectually competent female.

Celie took Shug's advice and created her own clothing company 'Folkspants Unlimited Company', which gave her economic independence and thus liberated her autonomous thinking from the traditional beliefs of 19<sup>th</sup>-century society. Since women were supposed to only wear dresses, making pants for both men and women was unconventional at the time; however, Celie was able to break the stereotyped image about the superiority of men over women by making pants for women and wearing them herself. This was Walker's way to promote equality between the two genders. At the end of *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker was able to paint a different image of the structure of the family that was apparent at the beginning of the novel, Celie was reunited with her sister and her two lost children and lived with Shug Avery, Harpo and Sofia got back together as husband and wife and Albert transformed into a kind man and befriended everyone including his ex-wife Celie.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

In *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker highlighted the importance of female sisterhood and friendship in Celie's declaration of independence. For Walker, all African-American females should team up to empower each other and alter the standards of the patriarchal community they are part of. Celie's emancipation was due to the different female relationships in her life ranging from education and support from her sister Nettie to Sofia's physical and moral encouragement to the sexual mentor, friend, and partner Shug Avery, "The Friendship which initiates among women in the novel is viewed as a redemptive relationship which heals all the hardships of their lives" (MusirandJawad, 2012, p. 28). Female friendships were not the only drive behind Celie's liberation.

Writing had a major role in her journey, especially at the beginning of the novel, mainly since Celie had no one to tell about her repeated sexual exploitations from both her father and husband, so writing to God was her



only resort to communicate her sufferings. McEwan (1998) terms Celie's transformation in the following way: "She grows in the course of the story from the pitiful child of the opening pages to the sensible, happy woman of the last. Although always vulnerable, she is steadfast; although often abused, she is loving; when loved she can respond and to grow" (p.56). Celie was able to surpass her traumatic experiences and secure her physical, psychological, sexual, and economic freedom making her a vigorous self-reliant woman.

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