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Violence and Women Resilience in Alice Walker's "The Color Purple"

العنف و صمود النساء في رواية أليس ووكر : اللون البنفسجي

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Abstract

Racist and sexist ideologies prevade every aspect of the American society to a degree that they become hegemonic and yet are seen as ordinary. Being black and being a woman in an American society meant that you are to be excluded from their culture and despised by them. Unlike their white female counterparts who were idealized through the images of : piety, purity, and domesticity , black women suffered all the burdens of prejudice and mistreatment, they were unacknowledged of in both: white society and feminist theoretical analysis and criticism. In stark contrast to the novels of black men who are obsessed by the white man, as the main obstacle to their manhood, black women encountered another barrier which is sexism and racism and their effects. This paper, aims at investigating the plethora of violence and the power of women's solidarity in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. The intended method for this paper is descriptive-interpretive, as it attempts to describe the miserable social life of black women in the US society, especially in terms of sexuality and gender inequality.

ملخص

تسود الأيديولوجيات العنصرية والجنسية كل جوانب المجتمع الأمريكي إلى درجة أنها أصبحت مهيمنة ومع ذلك يُنظر إليها على أنها عادية. ان تكوني سوداءا وتكوني امرأة في مجتمع أمريكي يعني أنه يجب استبعادك من ثقافتهم وازدراؤك. على عكس نظيراتهم من النساء البيض اللاتي تم إضفاء المثالية عليهن من خلال صور: التقوى والنقاء والألفة، عانت النساء السوداوات من كل أعباء التحيز وسوء المعاملة ، ولم يتم الاعتراف بهن لا في المجتمع الأبيض ولا حتى التحليل النظري النسوي والنقد. في تناقض صارخ مع روايات الرجال السود المهووسون بالرجل الأبيض على أنه العقبة الأساسية أمام رجولتهم، ارتأت المرأة السوداء اعتماد قضية أهم تتناول فيها موضوع التمييز على أساس الجنس والعنصرية واثارهما الجانبية على حياتها. يهدف هذا المقال إلى تحري العنف بمختلف أشكاله وقوة تضامن النساء في رواية اللون البنفسجي لأليس ووكر. المنهجية المعتمدة في هذا المقال هي الوصفية التفسيرية، حيث يحاول الباحث من خلالها وصف الحياة الاجتماعية البائسة للنساء السود في المجتمع الأمريكي ، خاصة فيما يتعلق بالتمييز على أساس الجنس وعدم المساواة بين الجنسين.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

التحيز
رواية اللون
البنفسجي
العنف
تضامن النساء
النسوية.

1. Introduction

white America locks black people out, and ignores them. One part of the problem is racial inequity. Another component of racism is gender-based racism, or sexism. Unlike black men, who have endured the problem of being black, black women, seem to have experienced an extra dimension of oppression: They are discriminated against in ways that bring together racism and sexism. Alice Walker who has contributed to the development of African-American literature, taking it into new heights by challenging the most powerful variables in influencing social perception: class, gender and social economic status, focuses on the theme of black women's journey from indecision to independence, in her third novel *The Color Purple*, where she also displays the suffering of black women, who were enduring gender discrimination, violence, racial oppression and sexual abuse. The novel fulfills African American women's need for a female hero.

The present paper examines the themes of gender-based violence, racism, incest and rape by the African American writer, Alice Walker in her novel *The Color Purple*, from an analytical perspective. It is believed that by analyzing the aforementioned novel, a better understanding of why female characters are subjected to socio-psychological abuse and how this affects their psyche, especially as far as their sexuality and gender are concerned. The novel depicts the lives of people who are socially submerged by two curses: being black and not white, and being a woman rather than a man. Both are on the bottom of the African American social ladder.

2. Research Questions

The current paper addresses the following questions :

- 1-What are the motives of African American writers such as Alice Walker in indulging in depicting the sufferings of black women?
- 2-Can the Feminist literary production in Black America be claimed to be a kind of therapy ?
- 3-What are the effects of slavery on black women's lives?
4. How can black women empowerment to each other

be helpful in liberating all females?

Aim of the Study

African-American female writers seem to have gone through the same excruciating experiences as the other lay black women. Physical abuse such as beating, rape, incest and unfair social treatment such as: child marriage, domestic violence, family preference for sons, have created a pattern in their lives. The aim of this study, therefore, is to examine violence engendered by the harsh consequences of slavery, racial segregation, social inequality and the effects thereof on African-American female writers' lives and the failure of Feminist movement in addressing American black women issues.

3. The Color Purple: an overview

The Color Purple is a novel about the dangerous, sometimes enraged, and destructive relationship that exists between black males and women, not only this but it also describes events that mirror US society, and how it is to live there. The most renowned African American writer and the founder of Womanism, aimed at reflecting the diverse experiences of the African American community in the U.S from the slavery era period to the victories achieved in overcoming stereotypes imposed by the white community. Inspired by Zora Neale Hurston, Walker published her Pulitzer winning prize novel: *The Color Purple*, in 1982. This novel gives a realistic approach to Walker's gruesome observations from the black lives; presenting the pathos and ethos of Black women's struggle through her characters.

Alice Walker, is one of the female writers who bore responsibility to restore some balance when talking about the horrors that American slavery spawned by challenging the established literary canon that helped in shaping the stereotypical images of black female inferiority. A reason why she published her third novel "*The Color Purple*" where she explored the triple bind of racism, sexism and poverty.

The novel is an epistolary form (composed of ninety letters) whose main character is the 14-year old illiterate, poor girl from rural Georgia, named Celie, who was oppressed, repeatedly raped and impregnated

twice by her step-father, the man she thought is her father. Celie decides to write letters to God as he is the only one to whom she can turn, especially when her step father warned her to remain silent: "you better not never tell nobody but god"(Walker3). Celie's sacrifices herself into a marriage to a widower, who wants to marry her sister Nettie. I ask him to take me instead of Nettie...I tell him I can fix myself up for him."(Walker 9) the widower, Albert in the novel referred to as Mr— is already in love with miss Shug Avery, the Blues singer.

Celie gradually manages to overcome the effects of years of degradation thanks to her relationship with Shug Avery, her husband's mistress, who helped her in developing a sense of her own beauty. The two women set up a home and business together. Celie, is the black girl who tells the story of thousands of other black girls, she opens the door for many to escape the confines of abuse. The story was adapted into a Golden Globe-winning movie by Stephen Spielberg, the well-known Oprah Winfrey, played a supporting part in the film. However, when the author went to see the movie at a New Mexico cinema, she was dissatisfied and shocked of how different is the movie from the book. As she declares in her introductory letter of the same book : "what stood out for me, watching the film, was how different it is from the book, I was surprised all over again by the sight of Mister bringing Celie home to the big house, which doesn't exist in the novel. Struck also to see how huge Mister(played by Danny Glover)is, since he is really quite small in stature in the book."(Walker1) she ends her letter by saying : "Thank God there is the book."(Walker 2)

4. The Color Purple Psychology and Symbolism

In terms of positive associations, purple is a combination of red, which is normally connected with energy and strength, and blue, which is associated with spirituality and integrity. Shades of purple (violet and lavender) blended together imply the union of body and soul. As it can denote feelings of unsettlement and therefore uncomfortable. In the novel the color symbolizes an indomitable female spirit, it appears several times in the novel, one can suggest that it refers to Celie's transformation from a naïve girl and

innocent girl to a mature woman. As Walker writes in the preface: "purple is always a surprise but is found everywhere in nature."

In the novel, Celie reveals her possession with the color purple. The color was also present in Shug's explanations: "I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it." (Walker 196) Basically, the color purple is: "Continually equated with suffering and pain, Sophia's swollen, beaten face is described as the color of eggplant. Purple is the color of Celie's private parts: the site of her sexual violation. Nettie's description of Africans as blue-black suggests that suffering is already marked on the flesh of a historically oppressed race." (Fiske 153)

5. Themes in *The Color Purple*

The female character in Walker's works go through three cycles of her personal construct of the history of black women: the suspended women during 18th, 19th and early 20th; mainly the women excluded from the society and received as cheap laborers. The second cycle from forties and fifties, when some African American women were trying to be part of the white society by embracing their standards with open arms and eventually denying their background and culture. The last cycle in the late sixties, includes more aware women who reclaim their past after the political changes such as the freedom movement. As a reaction to the feminist movement, Walker launches *The Color Purple* as a Womanist novel not a Feminist where she narrates black women's experiences in opposition to those of white females. Thus, Womanism and Feminism are different; Feminism is white and Womanism is black. The former is a term that covers many cultural approaches, aiming at establishing equality for women in all the spheres of life, including the ways in which patriarchal structures have marginalized them. However, from the very beginnings of feminism as a movement, the divide between white and black women was obvious. During the 19th century there was a negligible concern for black women, and it became clear that there were two separate women's movements. In US, white women intended to maintain black women at the bottom of the

social ladder by refusing to acknowledge their basic rights. Thereby, Alice Walker emphasized the fact that racism is rooted within feminism, she even begrudged feminists for non-womanizing black women and considering them as different species. Henceforth, walker coined the term Womanism as a reflexion to the marginalization by white feminists. Womanism emphasized the need for a strong community of women who would support each other in resisting oppression, racism and denigration without insisting that their situation is identical, a good example is witnessed in *The Color Purple*, where women endured all types of violence and finally managed to overcome it when they supported each.

5.1 Definition of Violence

The Color Purple addresses the theme of violence and the tribulation it causes, traced through the lives of African American women in the rural South of the United States. Violence is a universal occurrence in human civilization that is difficult to identify and discuss. Most synonyms for the term, such as hostile, violent, and ferocious, accurately depict the term's negative element, which is contained in most definitions. According to Kowaleski violence is : "an act of aggression that is usually destructive, antisocial, and degrading in its consequences and that usually seems deliberate" (Kowaleski 7).

Alternatively, Gender-based violence is a patriarchal practice that has evolved over time. Gender-based violence, in its most literal sense, is violence perpetrated against a person because of their gender. Gender-based violence, as seen through a common lens, refers to discrimination against women on the basis of physical, sexual, psychological, or economic hardship. Threats, arbitrary denial of liberty, female infanticide, child sexual abuse, forced labor, neglect, domestic violence, early marriage, and so on are all examples.

This definition faithfully depicts Celie's experience with her close relatives: She is sexually dominated by her step-father first and then her aggressive husband; she undergoes almost all the possible tragedies that can ever happen to a person: emotional traumas caused by her step-father's rape, at the age of only

14; separation from her two kids and her sister Nettie, her mother's death, and the subversive marriage with an abusive man: "my moma die, I tell shug. My sister Nettie run away. Mr.— come git me to take care his rotten children. He never ast me nothing bout myself." (Walker 103). Celie's outlining of her suffering is heartbreaking: She is orphan, without anybody to fall back on beside being forced to baby sit for her step sons. Her husband ignores her feelings all together, which is even more frustrating and degrading.

5.2 Psychological Violence

One way of exerting psychological oppression is via verbal insults, using dehumanizing words, along with degrading attitudes intended to offensively affect the insulted person's self-esteem. In Celie's case, these gauges can be applied to psychological persecution as she is the object of ignominious attitudes by her step-father: " he never had a kine word to say to me. Just say you gonna do what your mammy wouldn't" (Walker 3) and the diminishing comments of her husband: "Look at you. You're black, you're poor, you're ugly, you're a woman.... You're nothing at all." Mr. — to Celie (Walker 186). Both her step-father and husband perpetrated the habit of verbally abusing Celie; in their eyes only negative qualities are attributed to her: black tone, poverty, ugliness and being a helpless woman.

Celie, continues to express her psychological stress during her sexual intercourse with her husband: "I don't like it at all. What is it to like? He git up on me...plunge in. Most times I pretend I ain't there. He never know the difference. Never ast me how I feel. Nothing." (Walker 73-74)

Celie is isolated from society and banned from making any sort of friendship relations, her husband got rid of the letters she should receive from her sister "Dear Celie, I know you think I'm dead...I'm sure Albert is still the only one to take mail out of the box." (Walker 166). This ultimately disrupted the loving relationship of sisterhood and prevented Celie from having a sense of belonging. Consequently, making her emotionally and economically dependent on him.

Emotional violence also appears when Pa, as Celie

calls him, takes away her first child (a girl named Olivia), she thinks that he has killed him and threw him in the woods or rather sold him in the nearby town of Montello. The same thing re-happened to her second child (Adam) to whom Celie gave birth shortly after her first child, just like slaves who were not allowed to keep their children, when her mother asked her about the first child : “finally she ast me where it is ? I say God took it. He took it while I was sleeping. Kilt it out there in the woods.”(Walker 4) Celie lacks power and will to resist brutality imposed on her:” it all I can do not to cry. I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you are a tree. That’s how come I know trees fear men” (Walker 23). This is a telling example of a black woman’s perception of the dominance of men over their female counter parts as well as over mother nature.

5.3 Physical Violence

The novel begins with the admonition that releases fear into Celie just like the master controls his slave with a whip:” you better not never tell nobody but God. It’d kill your mammy (Walker 3) This warning comes as Pa , rapes Celie when her mother was unwilling to have coitus with him as Celie revealed: “he was pulling on her arm. She say it too soon, Fonso, I ain’t well...can’t you see I’m already half dead, an all of these children.”(Walker 7) Another facet of pain is when Celie is obliged to have sex with her step father: ”When that hurt, I cry. He start to choke me, saying you better git used to it. But I don’t never git used to it” (Walker 7-8) Celie’s sexual entrapment and abuse by her step-father illustrates the image of how black slave girls were raped by their white masters.

Celie’s step father impregnated her twice, and her mother was aware of her daughter’s pregnancy, but she thought that she has gotten pregnant by some local boys. As she was dying she asked her about the father, and Celie replied that God is the father : : “she ast me bout the first one Whose it is ? I say God’s. I don’t know no other man or what else to say. “(Walker 4)

Celie’s image of God is affected by her miserable life, the violent actions are transposed onto God a reason why Celie conflates her male abusive actions with the role of God in her life, by the end of the novel, when

Celie finds out that Pa is not her biological father, she angrily writes to God:” My daddy lynch. My mama crazy. All my little half-brothers and sisters no kin to me. My children not my sister and brother.Pa not pa. You must be sleep.”(Walker160)

Celie’s step father did not only abuse her sexually, he constantly beats her: “He beat me today cause he say I winked at a boy in a 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 7). And this did not end with her marriage, Mr—— was a vivid image to Pa. Celie as an innocent woman tolerates the inhuman behavior of her husband when he beats her, and says: “’cause she my wife, plus she stubborn. All women good for” (Walker 23) This model of false manhood is passed down through generations, Mr.—— represents the dominative masculinity when subjecting his wife and children to his will and wants his son Harpo to conform to brutal control, he tells him: “’ Wives is like children. You have to let’em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating” (Walker 35) Albert taunts his son, Harpo, to beat Sofia by saying that Sofia’s resistance makes him less of a man.

5.4 Domestic Violence

It is an established theory that woman, irrespective of her age, is supposed to do all the housework on her own without man’s help. Celie, accepts this position of enslavement to Albert and does all the household works thus, reproducing the traditional order, as for example when she asked Harpo (her step-son) to beat his wife Sofia, to make her more obedient, and when Sofia asked her about the reason, she replies :” I say it cause I’m fool, I say. I say it cause I’m jealous of you...cause you do what I can’t...Fight. “(Walker 39).

One of Albert’s sisters, Kate, who visits Celie, feels sad for her and asks Harpo to help her, he replies that it is woman’s job and that he is a man:” women work. I’m a man” (Walker 20) Albert’s treatment to Celie reveals lack of respect to women. Shug is the only female character who is not a victim of oppression or domestic violence, none of her male partners has ever beaten or mistreated her, she displays a masculine

sense of autonomy within her community.

5.5 Racist Violence

Racial discrimination is and has always been endemic in the United States. Throughout the novel, there is white American racism that segregated black women and separated them from the white women's world. The protagonist Celie explains the way she is discriminated against by the white community and her sister Nettie was afraid to bring Olivia and Adam (Celie's Children) back to America, where they will suffer from racism. Racism is also illustrated in the story of Sofia, the strongest woman in the novel when the white mayor jailed her sassing his wife and voicing a blunt opinion when his wife asked her to be her maid : "would you like to work for me, be my maid ? Sofia say, Hell no. She say what you say ? Sofia say, Hell no. Mayor look at Sofia, push his wife out the way. Stick out his chest. Girl what you say to Miss Millie ? Sofia say, I say, Hell no. He slap her." (Walker 81). Nevertheless when Sofia was released from prison, she was forced to be the woman, s maid. Thus, even after African American women were freed in accordance with the Emancipation Proclamation issued by president Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, they were still forced into slave-like conditions.

Another illustration appears when Mary Anges, asked for help from her white uncle, he thought of abusing her sexually, because he knows that he will never be charged for raping a black girl.

In terms of racist violence, there appears that men, who represent the patriarchal authority of husbands and/or fathers, happen to be victims. Eventually, imitating that violence in their relationships and torturing women in their lives because they were adequate victims. In this regard Celie's husband insults her for being black and ugly, as if he were white, he treated her as he himself would have been treated before 1863, that is as a slave, he constantly uses the white domination, racism, authority and prejudice over her.

By the end of the novel those men have undergone a significant transformation that implies the renunciation of male prerogatives and traditional roles of dominance. Anachronistically, Walker

created Harpo, who unlike his father Mr.— represents the model of new masculinity. This new man does the dishes willingly, and is not ashamed to acknowledge the feminine side of his personality. Owing to his father's aggressive demeanour, Harpo, the misfit in the male-dominated society of the time, becomes timid and fragile but not necessarily a homosexual.

By writing "*The Second Sex*", the French Existentialist philosopher, Simone De Beauvoir laid the ground for the radical Second Wave Feminism with her bold assertion that : "On ne nait pas Femme: on le devient" "one is not born but rather becomes a woman." Which means that woman is not a natural fact, there is no biological or psychological destiny that defines a woman as such, she is the product of history of civilization and the history of her childhood which determines her as a woman and creates in her something which is not at all innate, or an essence something which has been called The Eternal Feminine or Fertility. Beauvoir insists upon the fact that gender differences in the society make the man superior and gives him position of power in his society and with his family while women are subordinate and their position is that of the other, they are the continual outsiders

Beauvoir, disagreed with the idea that Inferiority of women is a natural thing that can not be changed no matter what. She states: "even the nature of things is not immutably Unchangeable , if women remain inferior it is because they have never attempted to change their own situation" (De Beauvoir 164)

One can say that women subjugation in Beauvoir's view is not a natural fact and even if it is, women can change it. The idea of superiority and inferiority must be discarded and women should fight for their emancipation, by identifying with each other.

6. Walker's Concept of Womanism

Womanism, often known as Black Feminism, arose from global feminism to raise social consciousness that sympathizes with African women's histories, who have been thrice persecuted, by racism, sexism, and economic exploitation ; a predicament that the feminist movement failed to identify and overlooked in favor of focusing on white women's suffrage. the

term was first used by Alice Walker, in 1983 when she talked about the womanist theory in her essay: *"In Search of Our Mother's Gardens"*.

Walker has coined the term Womanism in an attempt to bring about a change in the treatment given to black women by black men and whites in the society. However, Walker tries to highlight the shades of womanism in *The Color Purple* through the reflection of humiliation of black woman being both black and female. It wasn't until the early 1960's that black feminism became recognized as a theoretical and political movement.

During the late 1990's and in the first decade of 21st century, womanism changed under the influence of multicultural feminism who has many tenets in common with womanism; as the focus on ethnicity, race, sex, class and their effect on the lives of colored women. Womanism emphasized the need for a strong community of women who would support each other in resisting oppression, racism and denigration without insisting that their situation is identical. Walker, was inspired by the culture of African American foremothers which was based on building networks among women for they were the most vulnerable in addition the oppressed groups of men as well

7. Women Solidarity in The Color Purple

Celie's skin tone (black), socioeconomic status (poor), and physique (ugly) appear to be the cause of her worthlessness, which telescope most of African American women. Subconsciously, African American women struggle ferociously against this three-headed monster stereotype for cherished liberation "In the intersectionality of race, class, sexuality and gender the protagonist Celie struggles for self-definition in a world already defined for her: "but what you got? You ugly. You skinny. You shape funny. You too scared to talk to people." Mr. ——— to Celie (Walker186)

Celie, at first, cannot object to anything, however, in time by the help of other females like Shug, Sofia and Nettie, she came to realize that her life is in her hands, and that she has the right to object on the bad conditions she was living in.

Tending to Shug was Celie's way of filling the

void of sisterhood left by her sister Nettie. Shug, is a representation of the sexual stereotype placed on women, after realizing that Celie has no feeling toward men, including her husband, Shug takes it upon herself to teach her about her body, and here Celie gets to know that sex is never associated with submission.

Nettie, Celie's sister, imparts moralistic help to Celie as she strives with the brutal rapist Alphonso, and the cruel husband. She was Celie's tutor with reading and spelling. Nettie also informs Celie about her two missing children who are currently living with her and receiving good education. Celie acknowledges tranquility with her sister beside her, she was sure that eventually they will reconcile. This enables Celie to finally acquire the strength and challenge Mr—— by laying a curse at him before leaving to Tennessee to start her own business with Shug: "I curse you, I say. What that mean? he say. I say, until you do right by me, everything you touch will crumble. He laugh. Who you think you is?...You black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman. Goddam, he say, you nothing at all." (Walker187). Celie responds to him and confirms that she is black, ugly and poor but despite that, she is there!

In reciprocation, Celie represents the alternate mother to Nettie, After the death of their mother, Celie looked after Nettie, though she could not protect herself from the sexual violence of her step-father, and her mother could not protect her from such abuse, Celie who is two years older than her sister, saved the latter.

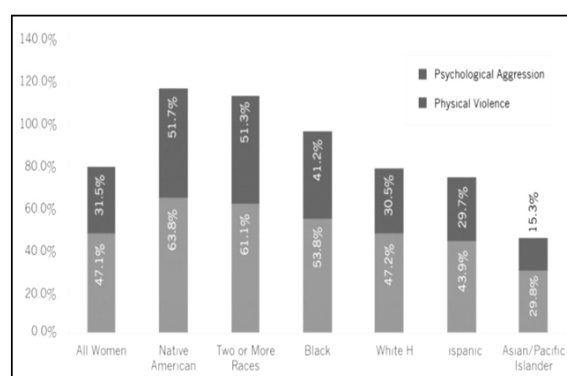
Sofia's relationship to Celie constitutes the non-biological sisterhood for both. The two meet when Harpo, Mr.——'s oldest son, brings a pregnant Sofia home to announce their plan for marriage. Sofia has a crucial role in Celie's life development, she helped her in recognizing the importance of being assertive and independent. she symbolizes defiance since she is not influenced by men when she makes her decisions.

The novel ends the conventional picture of the male-dominated southern community with the complete change of the main character as she "grows from a shy young woman to one who has the confidence to stand up for herself, eventually becoming one

of those women whose tongue hurls words of self-defense” (Tanritanir and Boynukara 289). Thanks to This female bonding which occurs over an extended period of time, Celie ”the depressed survivor, the victim of parent loss, emotional and physical neglect, rape, incest, trauma, and spousal abuse is able to resume her arrested development and continue development of processes that were thwarted in infancy and early adolescence.” (Proudfit 13)

Figure 1

Psychological Aggression and Physical Violence against Women



Source: Breiding et al.2014. compiled by the Institute of Women’s policy Research.

8. Results and discussion

Violence of all kinds, be it verbal or physical, is not limited to African American women only, all women can experience it, however women of color are often more likely to witness a substantial amount of psychological aggression and physical violence. According to a national intimate partner and sexual violence survey (2011) approximately one in three women (31.5 percent) undergoes physical brutality by an intimate partner, rape (8.8 percent), or other sexual violence estimated 15.8 percent.

The bar chart shows that in general, psychological aggression against women is at the rate of 47.1%, while physical violence is at 31.5%. Continuing this further, the bar chart exhibits that the psychological aggression in the Black race is at 53.8%, while the physical violence is at 41.2%. On the other hand, the psychological aggression in the white race is at 47.2%, while its physical violence rate is at 30.5%. It is interesting, however, to find out that the psychological aggression in Hispanic

people is at 43.9%, while its physical violence rate is at 29.7%. Lastly, the bar chart shows that the psychological aggression in Asian/Pacific Islander race is at 29.8%, while its physical violence rate is at 15.3%.

In striking contrast to the convergence between black community and other communities, higher rates of violence against women cannot be explained by a single motivating factor, economic insecurity, combined with racism and discrimination, shape how women of color experience violence in addition to the imbalance of power, poverty black women who live in impoverished areas have a three-fold chance of experiencing domestic violence as those who live in other areas as it is the case with the ugly, poor, uneducated Celie, who unlike her intellectual sister, Nettie, is continually abused by her step-father and her husband.

9. Conclusion

Racism seems to have replaced slavery as a demarcation line between black and white people, thus, excluding one group based on the naturalization of difference led to the institutionalizing of racist supremacy in patriarchal US. The practice of sexism and the act of racism did not stop with the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 by president Abraham Lincoln. In fact enslaved people, mainly men, accepted the patriarchal definitions of male-female gender roles and reproduced them, as a way to restore their lost manhood during the slavery period which ultimately led to a more marginalization for black women. Celie and Mr. are poor farmers who represent the archetype of that time when being unable to leave the south that enslaved their ancestors.

The novel is a neo-slave narrative through which the author shows how African American Women suffer the adversity of oppression and as a method of emancipation Walker, throughout the novel insists on female friendships as a way out of oppression. Celie, the protagonist of the novel, appears to be at the bottom of America’s social cast, she is- according to her oppressors- ugly, black, poor and uneducated female, her story illustrates personal transformation and self-discovery as it also fulfills the need of a female hero .

The Color Purple is a successful presentation of the pathos and ethos of black women fight for recognition as it shed light on the way black women were thrice victimized by: Racism, Sexism, and the Economic Exploitation. The newest thing Walker intended to lay the ground for through the novel was that women are victims not only because of men, it is because they are immature, irresponsible, and ignorant of the fact that their womanhood and race are important aspects of their identity, they thought that the only self-defining trait was race. It was not until the last decades of the 20th century when black women came to the conclusion that sex and race are interrelated and they were a means through which their subordinate status was established.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

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