

AN ANALYSIS OF BLACK WOMEN IN QUEST OF LIBERATION
IN ZORA NEALE HURSTON'S THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING
GOD AND ALICE WALKER'S THE COLOR PURPLE

A THESIS
BY
PATCHAREE SRISANG

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts degree in English
at Srinakharinwirot University

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AN ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to analyze how the black female protagonists, Janie Crawford in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and Cilie in Alice Walker's The Color Purple, reached their liberation. This study also compared Janie's ways of reaching her liberation to that of Cilie. Patricia Hill Collins's concept of black women's liberation was employed as a framework of the study to investigate the protagonists' progresses in reaching their liberations.

Findings of this study revealed that the two female protagonists successfully reached three levels of liberation. First, they realized their self-valuation and self-definition. At this stage, they saw their self-worth and voiced their rights against the unjust dominant power and conventional belief about black women. Next, they shared their life experiences to other black women. At this point, the power of sisterhood was strengthened. The two female protagonists' relationship to other black female characters empowered them to realize their inner power and they were able to pass their power to other black women. Finally, the Afro-American women's cultures including oral cultures and blues tradition assisted them to liberate themselves. From learning and joining cultural activities, the two protagonists understood their roots and their places in the communities. They applied the cultural knowledge to their real life situations and lived with other people happily.

This study also found that because of their different personal backgrounds including their educational and family backgrounds, the black female protagonists tended to react differently to their oppressions. Although they had different personal backgrounds, they both were able to free themselves from any social discrimination.

การวิเคราะห์ภาวะถูกกดขี่ซึ่งนำไปสู่การเป็นอิสระของตัวละครเอกที่เป็นผู้หญิงผิวสี

จาก นวนิยายของ Zora Neale Hurston เรื่อง Their Eyes Were Watching

God และ นวนิยายของ Alice Walker เรื่อง The Color Purple

บทคัดย่อ

ของ

พัชรี ศรีสังข์

เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา

ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษ พฤษภาคม พ.ศ.2551

พัชร ศรีสังข์. (2550). การวิเคราะห์ภาวะถูกกดขี่ซึ่งนำไปสู่การเป็นอิสระของตัวละครเอกที่เป็นหญิงผิวสีจากนวนิยายของ Zora Neale Hurston เรื่อง *Their Eyes Were Watching God* และ นวนิยายของ Alice Walker เรื่อง *The Color Purple*.
ปริญญาานิพนธ์ ศศ.ม. (ภาษาอังกฤษ). กรุงเทพฯ: บัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ. ประธานปริญญาานิพนธ์: อาจารย์ ดร. สุภาภรณ์ ยัมวิสัย, ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์เพ็ญณี ดิสกะประกาย.

ปริญญาานิพนธ์นี้มีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อวิเคราะห์วิธีการที่ตัวละครเอกที่เป็นผู้หญิงผิวสี Janie Crawford จาก นวนิยายของ Zora Neale Hurston เรื่อง *Their Eyes Were Watching God* และ ตัวละครเอก Celie จากนวนิยายของ Alice Walker เรื่อง *The Color Purple* ได้มาซึ่งอิสรภาพ และยังศึกษาเปรียบเทียบกระบวนการได้มาซึ่งอิสรภาพของตัวละครทั้งสองอีกด้วย การศึกษานี้ใช้แนวคิดของ Patricia Hill Collins ที่ว่าด้วยการได้มาซึ่งอิสรภาพของผู้หญิงผิวสีเป็นแนวทางในการวิเคราะห์ตัวละครทั้งสอง

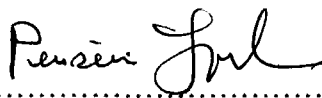
จากการศึกษาพบว่าตัวละครเอกทั้งสองได้รับอิสรภาพโดยพัฒนาการผ่านสามขั้นตอนขั้นที่หนึ่ง คือการตระหนักถึงคุณค่าและตัวตนที่แท้จริงของตนเอง โดยในขั้นนี้ตัวละครทั้งสองเล็งเห็นคุณค่าในตัวเอง และเรียกร้องสิทธิของตนเพื่อต่อต้านอำนาจอันไม่ยุติธรรมและแนวคิดดั้งเดิมเกี่ยวกับผู้หญิงผิวสี ขั้นที่สองตัวละครทั้งสองได้แบ่งปันประสบการณ์ชีวิตของตนเองกับตัวละครหญิงผิวสีคนอื่น ๆ ซึ่งทำให้เกิดพลังในกลุ่มผู้หญิง ในขั้นนี้ความสัมพันธ์ที่ตัวละครเอกทั้งสองมีต่อตัวละครหญิงอื่น ๆ ทำให้ตัวละครทั้งสองตระหนักถึงพลังที่มีอยู่ภายในตนเอง และสามารถถ่ายทอดพลังนั้นไปยังผู้อื่นได้ ในขั้นสุดท้ายวัฒนธรรมของผู้หญิงผิวสีซึ่งได้แก่ วัฒนธรรมการถ่ายทอดเรื่องราวผ่านการพูด และวัฒนธรรมเพลงในแนวลูส์ (Blues) ทำให้ตัวละครเอกทั้งสองเป็นอิสระได้ จากการเรียนรู้และการได้มีส่วนร่วมในกิจกรรมทางวัฒนธรรมเหล่านี้ทำให้ตัวละครเอกทั้งสองเข้าใจภูมิหลังของตนเองและเกิดความรู้สึกเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของชุมชน จากนั้นทั้งสองก็ได้นำความรู้ที่นำมาประยุกต์ใช้ในชีวิตจริงและอยู่ร่วมกับผู้อื่นได้อย่างมีความสุข

การศึกษานี้ยังแสดงให้เห็นอีกว่าเนื่องจากตัวละครทั้งสองมีความแตกต่างกันในด้านพื้นฐานชีวิตซึ่งรวมไปถึง พื้นฐานทางการศึกษาและสภาพครอบครัว จึงทำให้ตัวละครทั้งสองมีแนวโน้มที่จะตอบโต้กับภาวะถูกกดขี่แตกต่างกัน อย่างไรก็ตามถึงแม้จะมีพื้นฐานชีวิตแตกต่างกันแต่ทั้งสองก็สามารถปลดปล่อยตัวเองให้เป็นอิสระจากการกีดกันทางสังคมต่าง ๆ ได้ในที่สุด

The thesis titled
“An Analysis of Black Women in Quest of Liberation in Zora
Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God and Alice Walker’s
The Color Purple”

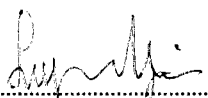
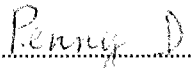
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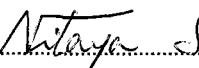
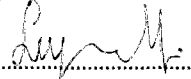
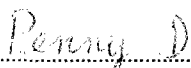
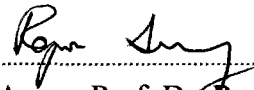

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Patcharee Srisang

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

In the late 15th century, Europeans began to explore, colonize and conquer the territory in America. They firstly used the Native Americans as their laborers.

However, the idea of using African slaves came after the Europeans found that it was difficult to control the Native American slaves. The Native American knew the location which made it easy for them to escape. Moreover, the African slaves were found to be more resistance to common diseases and they were familiar with a tropical climate and accustomed to agricultural work (Becker 1). The arrival of African slaves played a crucial role on the country development at that time.

In 1619, the first group of African slaves arrived in Jamestown, Virginia. Jamestown had exported ten tons of tobacco to Europe and it became a boom town. The export business was going so well that the colonists needed more slaves (Becker 2). As a result, regular slave trade was soon established and flourished in America.

Due to the law that made offspring of the slaves as slaves and the requirement of industrial section in order to develop the country, the number of slaves in America was larger. Many African American women were sent to the United States of America as slaves and servants. They were captured and sold to American slave dealers. Not so long after that, black women's oppression issue started.

Black women worked both inside and outside houses. They risked being raped by their white masters and beaten by black males in their own family. In some instances, a black man was able to select a mate of his choice. In contrast, a black

woman had little choice in selecting her mate. Living in a patriarchal society, black women became mere breeding instrument. Black men were chained and branded under slavery, so were black women. Lying nude on the slave ship, some women gave birth to children in the scorching hot sun (Becker 3). At that time, the gender prejudice was established among black slaves.

Because of the need of labor in American society, black women had to give birth to as many offspring as possible. After their child was born, they were allowed to nurse and fondle the infants only at the slave master's discretion. Black women were separated from their children, and had suffered seeing their children placed on the auction block as they were subject to flogging. In some cases, a black woman took the lives of her own children rather than handing them to the oppression of slavery. Toni Morrison, an African American woman writer, also presents the pain of African American woman slaves. In her novel, Beloved, she reveals how a slave mother is so scared of sending her children to be slaves that she decides to kill them.

However, there has been a continuation of African American women's liberation, and it was finally accomplished through civil war about three hundred years after the slave trade began. The process of freedom through the war took a large number of lives. After Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, African American population increased tremendously. The white Americans were anxious about the purity of their blood. At that point, the racism among skin colors spread throughout the country. Jonathan H. Turner and David Musick mention that discrimination has violated core value of freedom, equality, and individualism in American society (227). It creates many more social prejudice issues include social classes and gender issue. Black women are ignored and sent to live poorly in the bottom of the society because of their lack of education and power.

The racism that has haunted American society for centuries is not the only factor that severely affects black women's lives, Sexism and social class share major parts as well. Throughout the time, African American women are still the subjects in the sexually discriminatory and patriarchal society (Siriwong 20). Their fathers, brothers, and husbands who have higher social status have mastered them through times. As in many male dominated societies, American society limits places for women to excel socially. Although they take major roles in children upbringing, doing domestic work and working outside the house more recently, men still control knowledge, educational and political involvement (Collins 45). Men as leaders use their social power to devalue women's voices both inside and outside domestic areas. There are many negative controlling images created for black women such as image of being mammy, prostitute and laborers. Many African American women have given up their strength and throw themselves into hard work and still do all the unpaid chores which are believed to be their roles. The black women became more and more oppressed.

Zora Neale Hurston, in her novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God, calls black women as "mules uh de world" because black women seem to be born for labor needs but not for themselves. Patricia Hill Collins mentions that gender issue represents the form of objectification (71). Black women are treated as if they are objects, girls, or children who are less capable human beings. The stereotypical belief makes the women become invisible object of the society.

During 1960s, the period of Civil Right and Women's liberation movement, there were many feminists both men and women who started voicing for black women's better social status. Among the variety of strategies that aim to liberate black women, literary work can reach more audience because of its ability to touch mass

readers and stay long enough to be understood and discussed widely. The literary works portrays the lives of oppressed African American women, and attempt to persuade the women to gain a voice for themselves and others. Literary tools are used differently to present the lives of black women and what the society does to them that need to be changed. The work of black women writers is like a Trojan horse that wisely hides itself to get into the core of racist and sexist beliefs and overcomes the white supremacy conventional belief about black women. The stories are written to change the society and to heal wounded black women.

There are a number of black literary works such as Maya Angelou's I Knew Why The Caged Bird Sing (1969), Bebe Moore's Sweet Summer (1989), Toni Morrison' Sula (1974), Nella Larsen's Quick Sand (1928) all of which present unconventional black women heroines facing the stereotypical belief of being the oppressed black women. The novels share similar issues of racial and gender prejudice. Against the white supremacy, black feminist writers discover black women's liberation, and tell other women how they can be freed. Although many of the novels were firstly criticized as rebels of the society, they present new image of black women to be not only slaves of the society but also powerful voices that can really make a change for better lives. The black women writers untie culture knots and retell the stories to let black women talk for themselves and others. Among the outstanding writers, Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker give great support on black women's oppression and liberation issue through their novels.

Zora Neale Hurston or Zora Lee Neale Hurston is a pioneer of black women movement. Hurston has her unique way of looking at black women's life without concentrating too much on racism. She was born in a town of black people where she always sees black women proudly taking responsibilities for their properties and

family. Booker T. Washington says “Negroes are made to feel responsibilities of citizenship in the ways they cannot be made to feel elsewhere. If they make mistakes, they, at least, have an opportunity to discover themselves and find out what they can do” (Boyd 22). Hurston’s characteristic and lifestyle as a free soul woman strongly influences her protagonists, especially Janie Crawford in Their Eyes Were Watching God. The image of a free mind strong black woman is newly presented in Hurston’s work.

As Hurston is a folklorist and novelist, her work is based on real lives of black people. It presents a real and touching theme. The lifestyle of black people in a black community which was not noticed before was revealed. Her masterpiece, Their Eyes Were Watching God, was published in 1937 before any women’s movement began. It has strongly supported black women’s movement for liberation since the days James Baldwin and Alice Walker respectively discovered her work. Hurston presents life of a new world black woman who was born to be a strong fighter. Janie Crawford “jumps at the sun” as Hurston’s mother taught Hurston to. The protagonist experiences life and searches for her self-definition then she finally reaches her liberation.

The novel mainly follows Janie’s view on her life and finally presents that her decision to live unconventionally suits her inner desire and is not wrong. Janie gains more power in every decision she makes. The girl is forced to get married since she is so young because her Nanny wants her to be protected by a black old man who has money and land. Janie runs away with another ambitious guy named Jody Stark. With the second husband she seems to be happy but at some point she finds herself not loved. The protagonist doubts the ways her husband Joe Stark tries to control her while he is reaching high position as a black community leader. However, she finally

sets herself free after he passes away. Against the whole town idea of being good black women, Janie runs away to seek her true love. Janie's last love, which she considers to be the real one, is with a young man named Tea Cake.

Hurston's works become outstanding among other writers' works because of her uniqueness. However, her literary pioneer causes Hurston some troubles. Some of the critics at that time criticized Hurston's work through their view on her personal life. Hurston was considered to be not very ladylike because she smoked and sometimes acted as she was a man. Hurston works with many male writers. She does not worry much about her image. Hence, her idea of the new world black women was socially rejected by the mainstream stereotype. Her greatest novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God, had been forgotten until Alice Walker brings it back to life again years later. The book becomes so famous that Hurston herself might not even know it could be. Once the movement of black women's liberation starts, Hurston's works become a useful source. Many scholars look at her works through different and broader views. Since then, Their Eyes Were Watching God is considered to be a classic work of black literature. It inspires many new activists including Alice Walker, who calls Hurston "a genius of the South" (Wall 379), to fight for black women's liberation.

Alice Walker firstly emerged in the literary scene in 1968 with her first volume of poetry, Once, which deals with her experience in Africa, suicide, the civil rights movement and love (Richards 741). Walker's work is extraordinary and aims to present black women's oppressed life and how they can fight against racist and sexist society. Her works consist of black women's issues. She presents themes like searching for self, and the unity of all lives (Dieke 5). Walker's most famous novel, The Color Purple, gives power to wave the change on black women's liberation.

Although the novel is negatively criticized among some conventional critics, it is loved by black woman activists and ordinary black women who have been suppressed for too long.

The Color Purple, the first novel of Alice Walker, was published in 1982 and received 1983 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. The story presents the life of an oppressed African American woman named Cilie. The story presents the crucial view of being black women after the end of slavery. Walker reveals how black women can be enslaved by people who are close to them like their fathers, brothers and husbands. Cilie, the protagonist of the novel, The Color Purple, is sexually abused by her step father. She is forced to marry a widower who has several children. Cilie's husband is physically abusive towards her. The change in her life comes when she meets Shug Avery. The two women have sexual relationship and become lovers. After that, Cilie learns through her own life and other black women's lives how to fight back. She finally relies on herself for both sexual and financial happiness. Walker presents Cilie to live under all kinds of poor life conditions until she finally reaches her liberation. Throughout the story the character has grown to be stronger and matured to reach her self-liberation.

Although the two protagonists, Janie and Cilie, are different in many ways, they both live through their oppressed lives to reach their liberation. They are now studied widely and accepted as rebellious heroines in African American literary works. This study aims to analyze how black female protagonists of the two novels, Janie Crawford in Their Eyes Were Watching God and Cilie in The Color Purple, overcome their oppression and reach their liberation. Finally, this study compares Janie's causes of oppression and liberation to Cilie's.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study are:

1. To study how the female protagonist, Janie Crawford in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God reaches her liberation by employing Collins's three key themes of black women's liberation: an emphasis of self-definition and self-valuation, the interlocking nature of oppression, and the importance of Afro-American women's culture.
2. To study how the female protagonist, Cilie in Alice Walker's The Color Purple reaches her liberation by employing Collins's three key themes of black women's liberation: an emphasis of self-definition and self-valuation, the interlocking nature of oppression, and the importance of Afro – American women's culture.
3. To compare how Cilie in The Color Purple reaches her liberation to how Janie does the same in Their Eyes Were Watching God.

Significance of the Study

1. The study will help readers aware of racial and gender prejudice.
2. The study will provide an understanding of the causes of black women's oppression.
3. The study will provide an understanding of how black women reach their liberation.
4. The study will help readers appreciate value of African American literature.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study covers the following:

Zora Neale Hurston's protagonist named Janie Crawford in Their Eyes Were

Watching God, and Alice Walker's protagonist named Cilie in The Color Purple

focusing on the female protagonists' liberation by employing Collins's the three key themes of black women's liberation.

Definition of Terms

1. Black women's oppression refers to the negative outcome experienced by black women who are exploited by the cruel exercise of power in a society or social group. The three causes of black women's oppression including personal biography, community, and social institutions which are discussed in Collins's writing black women's oppression is closely associated with racism, sexism, and derived social systems.

2. Black women's liberation refers to the quest of black women for their equal rights in the society. Black women's liberation is an action that aims to free black women from the unwanted control of an area, person or people. According to Collins's writing, there are three key themes of black women's liberation including an emphasis of self-valuation and self-definition, the interlocking nature of oppression, and the importance of Afro-American women's culture.

Procedure

This is a descriptive research study conducted in accordance with the following procedure:

1. Accumulation of Information

Information was conducted on the following topics:

- 1.1 The concept of black women's liberation
- 1.2 The related research on the related issues

1.3 The biography of Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker

2. Information Analysis

2.1 The female protagonists' ways of liberation in the novels, Their Eyes Were Watching God and The Color Purple, was analyzed by employing three key themes of black women's liberation.

2.2 The similarities and differences between the ways the two female protagonists reach their liberation were analyzed.

3. Report of Findings

The findings of the study were reported in expository form.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions for Further Study

A conclusion will be drawn from the findings and suggestions were made for further study.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

This chapter focuses on three major themes: The concept of black women's liberation, the related research, and the biography of Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker.

1. The Concept of Black Women's Liberation

In 1960s when Civil Rights movement occurred, African American women's existence and needs were still ignored because most of the scholars who created the movement were white. By denying African Americans' education opportunity, it certainly excludes black people from positions as scholars, teachers, authors and critics (Collins 5). The racist idea had crucial influence on women's right movement. Katie Cannon, one of black feminists, observes that African American women have to struggle to survive in two contradictory worlds, one is white, privileged and oppressive and other black, exploited and oppressed (30). However, the frustrating situation that African American women faced encouraged them to seek their own liberation and that was where the origin of the black women's liberation started.

Against the white supremacy belief, Bell Hooks asserts that the African American woman is "somehow an earthy mother goddess who has built-in capacities to deal with all manners of hardship without breaking down, physically or mentally"(15). She discusses that rather than acknowledge their needs for variable support systems, black women have been given up themselves. They somehow have turned their backs to their liberation and continue living under powerful groups of people in the society.

Because of black feminist movement, the society concentrates more on black women's issues. The movement supports not only black women but also the other group of oppressed women all over the world to voice for their liberation. Black feminists offer new ways of liberating black women by using an Afro-centric process. It was the process created by black women who had suffered for a long time. The idea of black women's liberation stops the invasion of the Euro-centric scholars on black traditional ways of life. It ends cultural colonization and the dehumanization process. The concept addresses the way black women are experiencing their oppressed lives and being treated unequally under the sexist and racist society and how they reach their liberation.

There are a number of black feminist theorists who give great effort to liberate black women such as Barbara Smith, Bell Hooks and Maria Stewart. Among them, Patricia Hill Collins has presented her significant works on the issue.

Collins is working as a sociology professor in University of Maryland, College Park. She is well-recognized as an important black feminist after publishing her book, Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment in 1990. Collins continuously works on black women's issues and publishes significant works including Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice in 1998, Black Sexual Politics in 2004 and in 2006 she published From Black Power to Hip Hop: Racism, Nationalism, and Feminism.

This study aims to observe black women's liberation by employing Collin's three key themes of black women's liberation including an emphasis on self-valuation and self-definition, the interlocking nature of oppression, and the importance of Afro-American women's culture.

1.1 The Causes of Black Women's Oppression

Collins in her Black Feminist Thought : Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment, mentions that black feminist thought demonstrates black women's ways of empowering themselves to confront race, gender and class oppression. Collins focuses her study on the Afro-centric feminist thought only, so that the black women's issues are examined and observed more closely. Collins's concept of black women liberation corresponds with other scholar's work such as Barbara Smith's and Bell Hooks's. They agree that one cannot learn about black women's oppressed life through the inexperienced eyes of the white scholars. Collins focuses her study on the importance of knowledge on empowering black oppressed women. According to her writing, there are three causes of oppression separated into three levels: personal biography, cultural context, and social institutions.

1.1.1 Personal Biography Level

The level of personal biography gives the idea of how an individual black woman can be oppressed in the society. Collins states that each person has a unique personal biography made up of concrete experience, values, motivations, and emotions.

The way that each person faces situations of domestic violence and abuse or cases like that affects their internalized oppression, and this is an encounter at personal level. It provides the answer why many black women who are abused or treated badly from people in the family refuse to fight and tend to be oppressed and given up. Their values of life, motivation and emotions will be changed because of their exploited experience.

Collins mentions that the top down power forces and controls victims like black women to give up their liberation to the more powerful superiors such as white

males, white females and black males. Collins states that many women choose to stay with abusive men even though they have an opportunity to leave. It is similar to how slaves didn't kill their owners to free themselves. They denied chances of victory and faced the failure because of their self-denial and self-destruction. The exploited background of each black woman is a major obstacle of her self-liberation.

1.1.2 Community Level of Cultural Context

The second cause of oppression happens in a group or community level of cultural context created by race, class, gender, religion, and sexual orientation. It is formed by experience and ideas that people share with each other in the community. This level concerns stereotypical belief of people about social issues.

The example of black women's oppression in this level is the racist perspective of black women on the standard of beauty. The Euro-centric standard of beauty makes black women hate their skin color and hair texture (Collins 5). The white skin, blonde hair and blue eyes which constitute the concept of beauty are formulated by white people and approved by black people destroyed black women's self-satisfaction. Black women tend to believe that white females are more beautiful and they are ugly. In Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye, the young black female protagonist had great passion on having blue eyes and she could do anything to get her eyes blue.

Moreover, some Euro-centric gender ideology leads black men to believe in their power over their women and start abusing black women and treating them unequally. In the past, black male slaves who were oppressed from their masters abused their women to release the pain of their soul. Nowadays, the masculinity idea still plays major role in the society both inside and outside the house. A black woman works for low wages outside her house and does domestic work for free. These

stereotypical beliefs keep black women from reaching their liberated life. African American women are pushed down to the bottom of the society. They are kept from reaching any educational opportunities and excluded from taking any leading roles.

1.1.3 Social Institutional Level

The third cause of oppression happens at the systemic level of social institutions. Collins believes that the social institutions are controlled by the dominant groups such as schools, churches, the media, and other formal organizations. The dominant groups have been seducing, pressuring, or forcing African American women to replace individual and cultural ways of knowing by giving them new negative image of themselves (Littenberg, 72). The institutions offer the promise of both literacy and other skills that can be used for individual empowerment and social transformation but they require docility and passivity. The seduced members need to be silent if they want to be accepted as part of the social institution. Religion, through church system, requires tamed followers who will never question about their god.

Collins stated that the powerful groups of people in the society will silence black women and devalue their thinking. In the past, the women were used to work as laborers so black men could go to school and become their leaders. The given leading roles empower black men over black women and it is not easy to re-construct the dominant group and empowers black women instead. Hence, the situation causes black women's oppression.

1.2 Black Women's Liberation

Patricia Hill Collins, in her writing Learning from the Outsider Within: the Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought, mentioned three key themes to reach black women's liberation including an emphasis of self-valuation and self-

definition, the interlocking nature of oppression, and the importance of Afro-American women's culture.

1.2.1 An Emphasis of Self-Valuation and Self-Definition

Collins mentioned that in order to reach their liberation, black women need to realize their self-valuation then start defining their own positive images as human subjects.

1.2.1.1 Self-Valuation

Collins mentions about self-valuation or what can be called self-worth, self-love, or self-respect. It is the first step to free black women. In order to reach their liberation, black women have to realize their value against pain, violence and death. In the society that no one feels obligated to respect African American women, the women have to realize their self-respect and learn to demand respect from others (115). Black women need to learn to love and appreciate themselves as decent persons.

Collins points out that some black women give up their self-value because they are oppressed under the controlling images given by the dominant groups in the society. They become self-hatred. Pecola, a black female protagonist, in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eyes longs to be white to escape from the pain of being black, female, and poor (93). The protagonist lost her self-value. Many black women face their failure because of their self-denial and destruction. They deny the chance to pursue their liberation. However, Collins mentions about women's consciousness as a journey from internalized oppression to the free mind of a self-defined (112).

1.2.1.2 Self-Definition

According to Collins's work, self-definition is the next step to reach liberation. Self-definition is the power to name one own reality (Collins 300). It is how black

women re-define themselves by using their truth against negative external definition given by some superior dominant group such as white people (10). Audre Lorde emphasized that “It is axiomatic that if we do not define ourselves for ourselves, we will be defined by others for their own use and to our detriment” (45).

Collins stated that a black woman needs to have voice in the community because voice is the power to live equally with others, but before she uses her voice the woman needs to realize that she has it. Collins stated that the voices of these African American women are not voices of the victims but of the survivors (98). She also mentioned that the power of black female’s self-definition validates their power as members of community not the slave ones. What Collins means is that each black woman who was exploited needs to stand up and fight wisely.

Although individual is a key, the collective action can generate lasting social transformation of political and economic institutions that lead to black women’s liberation. The connection among black women is needed in the next level to overcome oppression and reach the liberation.

1.2.2 The Interlocking Nature of Oppression

In this level, Collins does not state that these are patriarchy, capitalism, or racism. Rather, she argues that these issues are connected with and acted to create forms of oppression. Collins’s focus is on how the experiences and knowledge of black women can be applied to counter these forms of subordination and oppression. She argues that knowledge can be power, and this power can be used or shared by the oppressed people. The power from this perspective is a creative power used for the good of the community (Collins 2).

Collins mentions that although there is a set of personal experiences and knowledge that owned by each individual, there are some commonalities among

them. By sharing and discussing these similarities and differences in interpersonal level, black women can assist each other to reach their liberation in the community level.

In addition, there is a possibility that some external stereotypical beliefs such as the standards of beauty that leads many African-American women to dislike their skin color or hair texture can be ended through their understanding in nature of oppression (Collins 5). Collins in her idea of the interlocking nature of oppression mentioned that to end black women's oppression, each black woman needs support to change the community's perspective on their images. Collins mentions that the interpersonal power typically goes unnoticed but powerful enough to foster black women's liberation.

Although the realization of self is the start of black women's liberation, the success of liberation will actually happen when relationship among black women occurs. The fundamental rise of individual strength against prejudice belief is a key leads to the changed perspective. Once one voice is heard, it creates a wave of cultural change that will last longer. Group work or any creative activities such as oral culture and women's quilt groups will make community stronger. By making black community stronger, black women become empowered. Through the support of black community, black women do not have to encounter race, gender and class oppression alone.

1.2.3 The Importance of Afro-American Women's Culture

The last key theme of black women's liberation is the recognition of black women on the importance of their culture and knowledge. The advantage of focusing on the culture is that it may assist black women to see the circumstances that shape race, class and gender oppression and ways to end the issue (Collins 163). Black

women need to live and learn their root and culture together. At this level, black women are accepted as members of social institutions such as schools, churches, media, and other formal organizations.

In fact, culture relates to family networks, art, music, and dance as well as patterns of economics and political activity made by or for the black people. Collins also mentioned the power of sisterhood culture as another way to liberate black women. The knowledge shared among black women while they are helping each other raise their children when their men are at work can mentally support them to achieve their liberation.

In this study, the concept of black women's liberation provides an understanding about black women issues presented through the two black female protagonists, Janie Crawford and Cilie in the two selected novels. The concept was used as the foundation of the analysis in the following chapter of this research. However, the similar issues of black women's liberation have been studied widely through times. In the following part of the paper presented the seven related studies on the issue.

2. Related Research on Black Women's Liberation Issues.

Although there have been studies on black women's oppression and liberation relating to this research, this study collects seven related studies to present clear picture of how this similar issue had been studied and developed through times. Moreover, the significance of this study can fill the gap of the investigation on the issue. Some previous studies that focus on black women's oppression are as follow.

Donna Lynn Cook's dissertation, "Beholding the Beauty of Self: The Psychological Integration of the Afro centric-self among African American Females

Socialized in a Euro-centric Aesthetic”, in 2007, explored the self- esteem and body image disturbances of black women participants from receiving the perceptions of Euro- centric ideal women as tall, white, slender, and often blond and blue eyed. According to Cook’s study, black women might have health problem trying to fit in this westernized standard of beauty. Cook found that the self- defined standpoint shared by each participant could be an important key to solve the black women’s oppression problem.

Deeper in the personal oppression issue, Helen Anne Turnbull in her dissertation, “The Experience of Internalized Oppression among Female Diversity Workers of Different Social Identity Groups”, in 2005, examined the importance of internalized oppression on relationships with women across different social identities, ethnicities, and sexual orientations. She used sixteen women as participants, eight black women from America and another eight from England. Turnbull’s finding suggested that the women have developed creative survival to cope with the continuing presence of internalized oppression.

In addition, three related research on black women’s liberation are collected. Stephanie Li (2007) studied black women’s oppression in her dissertation, “Resistance Through the Body: Power, Representation, and the Enslaved Woman”. She examined the way in which African American women use their reproductive abilities and representational strategies to resist slavery and its oppressive legacy. Li used the nineteenth and twentieth century American literary texts as sources. She found that family unity, freedom of one’s children, and presentation of close personal relationship were more important for women’s liberation than individual liberation. She claimed that the relationship among people in the community could lead black women to real liberation.

Reenee K. Harrison's "Dancing Ourselves Free: Black Women, Violence, and the Art of Creation", in 2006, by using historical records and stories, aimed to study the resistance strategies that African American women used in mid seventeenth and nineteenth century to deal with violence and oppression. She discovered strategies of resistance and practices of freedom and well being to sustain women beyond violence.

Valencia Elaine Edner-Turner, (2001) in her dissertation, "You got tuh go there tuh know there" Hurston's Delia, Missie Mae, Janie and a girl: Blues feminists empowered through personal choice", emphasized her study on Zora Neale Hurston's work. The selected sources of her study are four of Hurston's female characters: Delia Jones in Sweat, Missy Mae in The Gilded Six-Bits, Janie Mae Crawford in Their Eyes Were Watching God, and a girl in Story in Harlem Slang. The study identified the blues songs of Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey that parallel their stories, and explored the internal feminist voice in the Smith's and Rainey's music and Hurston's literature. She mentioned that the characters redefine their existences and achieve self-definition through personal choice with blues tradition, and accordingly, there are blues lyrics that mirror these women and their choices as well.

In Thailand, the research that mostly relates to this study is the research of Rattiya Siri Wong and Warangkhan Chinapas. Siri Wong in her "A Comparative Study of Women's Struggles as Presented in *The Color Purple* and *The Women Warrior*", compared and analyzed women's struggles from Alice Walker's The Color Purple and Maxine Hong Kingston's The Women Warrior to understand their oppression and fighting for freedom of the two oppressed groups of women. The study focuses on the female protagonists' problem of culture, sex role, education, marriage, career, value, and beliefs under gender issues. Siri Wong found that despite their hard conditions of living and different background, both Chinese and African American protagonists

reached their individual rights through their own fighting. However, she mentioned that factors of patriarchy, sisterhood, education, family-relationships, cultural concerns, and economic independence affected minority women in search for their liberation.

Chinnapas (2000) in “A Study of Ethnic Identity Search of the Main Character in *My Place*” examines the ethnic identity search of the main character in the novel. She analyzed the family’s background, school environment, and the personalities of the main character. Chinnapas applied the ethnic identity formation model developed by Jean S. Phinney (1989) to her study. She found that having true identity is an essential factor for the main character to be in a society.

This study, through feminist view on black women’s issue, investigates deeper in details about how the protagonists reach their liberation through each level by employing Collins’s concept of black women’s liberation. Besides, the related research, the biographies of Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker are collected to see two related perspectives on black women’s liberation issues.

3. The Biography of Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker

Since the 1970s, the increased literacy among African Americans provided new opportunity for black people to express their oppressed lives through their writing. Black stories were produced and studied widely. Among them are Zora Neale Hurston’s and Alice Walker’s works.

3.1 Biography of Zora Neale Hurston

Zora Neale Hurston was an American author who wrote stories, novels, anthropological folklores and autobiography. The year Zora Neale Hurston was born was not clear but some evidence said it was sometime from 1891-1901. Hurston was

born in the town of Eatonville, Florida which is the setting of her famous novel Their Eyes Were Watching God. In her childhood, Hurston grew up poor but she had a great desire to study. Hurston who lived in a black community town was fulfilled with black folk life.

Hurston was influenced to be strong by her mother, Lucy who encouraged her to be independent and creative (Kaplan 20). She used to say, “Mama exhorted her children at every opportunity to jump at de sun. We might not land on the sun, but at least we would get off the ground.” Hurston’s unique personality was presented in her literary works.

Hurston started her literary work in 1928 but because of her financial problem, she had to work under Mrs. Mason’s financial support. Mrs. Mason who was white funded Hurston so that she could go south and collect some folklore and write. The lady was extremely controlling and was a large factor influencing what Hurston did and did not write about and published in her life (Boyd 159).

Hurston lived in New York during different times in her career from 1925, and joined the Harlem Renaissance. She was one of the shapers of the black literary and cultural movement of the twenties. Her works such as Mules and Men (1935), Dust Tracks on a Road (1942) and Jonah’s Gourd Vine were considered to be key texts in African American literary and cultural studies (Wall 379) even though they were considered to be hopelessly naive during her time.

Zora Neale Hurston was described by those who knew her as having the personality traits of loudness and coarseness. She was criticized as a controversial, highly outspoken, arrogant, independent, and eccentric black woman (Kaplan 50). According to her personal life, Hurston received a lot of criticism in her time by other writers, some of whom were also involved in the Harlem Renaissance. Hurston's work

came at a time when critics were both white and black, but all were men. She faced sexism in her career.

Darwin Turner was one of the critics of Hurston's work at that time. Turner tended to primarily base his critique on his personal views of Hurston's personality. He said Hurston was a "quick-tempered woman, arrogant toward her peers, obsequious toward her supposed superiors, desperate for recognition and reassurance to assuage her feelings of inferiority". However, a female critic, Mary Helen Washington has said that "To a large extent, the attention focused on Zora Hurston's controversial personality and lifestyle has inhibited any objective critical analysis of her work" (124).

After the rise of black women's liberation, Hurston's works were studied widely. Her way of presenting black American women's lives is different from other black woman writers because it does not totally focus on racism. Hurston's works mainly portray image of gender prejudice among African Americans. In addition, the uniqueness of Hurston's work is that she does not only show the suffering and oppressive lives of black women but also presents them in various emotions of laughing, celebrating, loving, and struggling.

As a black woman with a career in writing in the 1920's through the 1950's, Zora Neale Hurston was strong. However, she lived in controversy and died poor in 1960. When she died she was thirty years out of print. However, in the 1970's, Alice Walker resurrected her works. Now, Hurston's books are considered to be one of the important representatives of literary work that voice for black women's liberation.

3.2 The Biography of Alice Walker

Alice Walker was born Alice Malsenior Walker on February 9, 1944, in Eaton, Georgia. She was the eighth and last child of Willie Lee and Minnie Lou Grant

Walker, who were sharecroppers. Alice Walker's parents have different ideas about educating their children. Willie Lee, Walker's father who was uneducated worried about sending his children to school. He was afraid that education would be a barrier between him and his children. However, Walker's mother tried every way to support her children in education. She wanted them to experience and live their life freely.

Walker's literary works such as The Third Life of Grange Copeland (1970), In Love and Trouble (1973) and The Color Purple (1982) present the issue of spiritual survival of black people and people of color all over the world (Richards 741). Her writings include novels, stories, essays and poems. Walker also published a biography of the poet, Langston Hughes, and worked to recover the nearly-lost works of Zora Neale Hurston who had major impact on her style of writing.

Walker's works are known for her portrayals of the African American woman's life. Through her touching theme and characters, she depicts sexism, racism and poverty that often make life a struggle. Walker not only presents an individual's struggles but reveals the whole community. She emphasizes on the importance of the strength of family, self-worth, and spirituality. Moreover, she presents the preservation of black culture. In her works, she writes about women's life in the past to present the root of the black women's oppression issues as in The Color Purple. Her works present the relationships of people with each other, from young to old, parent to child, and man to woman.

Although Walker's works, especially The Color Purple, are famous, some critics believe that she is a men-hater. Walker's black characters in The Color Purple are criticized to be too negative and mostly present bad images of black men. Some critics mention that "for Walker's men to be good, they must be feminized" (Richards 751). Her portrayal of black men was continuously attacked after The

Color Purple was made into a film in 1985. It was praised and blamed widely at the same time.

However, with the deeper and wider eyes, many critics see Walker's work as a treasure of literary world. Jargo Morrison in his article "Writing and Activism: Alice Walker" mentioned that Walker's protagonists are unique because they search for alternative forms of struggle. He states that the protagonists have the characteristic of activists who desire to change for better life. Walker's works seek to incorporate and celebrate women's sexual pleasure and women's spirituality together (214).

Besides literary work, Alice Walker also worked as an activist in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's, and in the 1990's she was a great activist in the women's movement. She spoke for the women's movement, the anti-apartheid movement, for the anti-nuclear movement, and against female genital mutilation. Alice Walker received the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1983 for her novel, The Color Purple. She started her own publishing company, Wild Trees Press, in 1984.

Although Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker had never met each other, their literary works markedly share the same issues of black women. Because of their strong female protagonists, their literary works timelessly present black women's oppression and support the movement of black women's liberation.

This study aims to fill in the gap among the previous studies on black women's liberation by seeing the issue through black feminists' view in two selected novels; Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and Alice Walker's The Color Purple. Rather to focus on only the self, language, gender and races, this study employs Patricia Hill Collins's concepts of black women's liberation. It provides better understanding on the struggles of the two protagonists and how they overcome the oppressions to reach their liberation through each level.

Chapter 3

An Analysis of Black Women In Quest of Liberation through Janie Crawford, the Female Protagonist, in Their Eyes Were Watching God

Zora Neale Hurston in her novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God, presents the oppression of Janie Crawford, the black female protagonist, and the way she reaches her liberation. Through Janie's life, Hurston reveals the struggles of a black woman who has exploited family background and lives in male dominated society. The protagonist's struggles are analyzed to understand the way of black woman's liberation.

1. An Emphasis of Self-Valuation and Self-Definition

According to Collins's concept of black women's liberation, the protagonist's exploited personal background strongly affects her life. It causes Janie to be oppressed.

Hurston presents Janie's childhood experience as the first cause of her life struggles. The protagonist, who is raised by her conventional black grandmother, is not being able to master her life. Nanny, who is raped by a white man, looks at black women as helpless people who need care from men. She never realizes her self-value because living through slavery gives her miserable life experience. Hence, old Nanny never wants her grandchild to experience the same miserable situation. Nanny, who has no self-valuation, tries to pass the same thought to young Janie. The protagonist is forced to enter a married life when she is so young and not ready to get protection

from men.

Hurston reveals that the protagonist has to face oppression in her marriage instead of being loved. Although, Janie tries to present her existence and needs by raising her self-valuation to love or be loved by her old husband, Logan Killicks, she cannot reach it. Although she always longs for true love as she says “Ah wants things sweet wid mah marriage lak when you sit under a pear tree and think” (23), but it never happens.

Janie is expected to work hard in both housework and farm work. Her passion to have true love is looked as a ridiculous idea. Janie’s self is destroyed by the black conventional belief. The old Nanny expects Janie to reach the dream that she cannot reach. That is to be in high chair which means being a rich black woman.

You know, honey, us colored folks is branches without roots and that makes things come round in queer ways. You in particular. Ah was born back due in slavery so it wasn’t for me to fulfill my dreams of whut a woman oughta be and to do....Ah wanted to preach a great sermon about colored women sittin’ on high, but they wasn’t no pulpit for me (15)

The above presents Nanny’s view on black women’s lives. She believes that black women should look for financially secured life and they have to keep what they desire inside. Since Nanny takes care of her, Janie cannot reject entering marriage life. She marries Logan who owns a large piece of land. Logan is old and conventional. He wants Janie to work in the farm with him and works as hard as other black women in town. When Janie denies working in the farm and argues that her responsibility is domestic work. Logan says “You ain’t got no particular place. It’s where Ah need yuh. Git uh move on yuh, and dat quick.” (39). When her marriage does not provide her with love, Janie leaves Killick and runs away with Jody Starks, a man with high ambition.

Living with Jody, her second husband, Janie faces different oppression. She

does not have to work in the farm but she has to live under Jody's power. Janie is kept inside his big house. Her thought is devalued by her powerful husband. Jody keeps her from sharing any wisdom with the town people whom he calls trashy people.

The beauty of Janie is used by Jody to empower his position as the town's mayor. He tells Janie to dress up and stand in the store all day. Jody does not want anyone's wife to rank with his as he says "Janie must look on herself as the bell-cow while the other women were the gang" (50-51). The protagonist becomes speechless. Her weakness allows Jody to shape her to be as he wants. The loss of self, place, and connection with other people leads Janie to a gloomy oppressed life. She is physically and mentally beaten by her husband.

Although the protagonist wants to fight about it sometimes, she cannot do it against Jody. Moreover, she has a compromised personality. She mentions that "Ah hates disagreement and confusion, so Ah better not talk. It makes it hard tuh git along" (69). Her decision of not telling about her inner needs can be considered as self-denial and self-destruction. The protagonist becomes ignored, oppressed and invisible. However, her life experience that she gains through time from herself and other black women assists her to reach her self-valuation and self-definition.

1.1 Self-Valuation

The protagonist's desire to be free do not leave her although she is forced to get married. Janie learns a lesson from that oppression. Hurston mentions that the lesson turns Janie from a young innocent girl into a grown up woman when she marries Logan. Janie leaves Logan because she values herself worthy enough to be loved and to have a better life. The protagonist refuses to live as a particular black woman who has to work hard and spends most of the time in her life for other people. Janie wants to live for her own sake.

Although the exploited personal background firstly leads the protagonist to her oppressed life, Janie learns from her struggles and makes better change for herself. She lives with a white family when she is a little girl. This creates her strong and unique personality. Janie always questions herself and other about life. People around her, with conventional belief about being black women, seem to force her into high expectation of being a good black woman. Thus, she sometimes dreams about outdoors, in nature, or in the green world where she can find herself in real peace. She attempts to be free.

Janie realizes her self-worth as when Killick, her first husband orders her to work in the farm with him, she talks back to him.

Ah'm just as stiff as you is stout. If you can stand not to chop and tote wood
Ah reckon you can stand not to git no dinner.'Scuse mah freezolity,
Mist' Killicks, but Ah don't mean to chop de first chip (33)

Janie reminds Killick about the differences between women's and men's responsibility. However, Killick who works hard and is very conventional always mentions how grateful he is to help Janie by marrying her and gives her house to live and food to eat. Janie knows that he just wants to have a control over her as the other black men have over their women. She does not let him do that. The protagonist presents her self-value through her words.

Youse mad' cause Ah don't fall down and wash-up dese sixty acres uh
ground yuh got. You ain't done me no favor by marryin' me. And if dat's
what you call yo'self doin', Ah don't thank yuh for it. Youse mad' cause
Ah'm tellin' yuh whut you already knowed (39).

From the above citation, it explains that Janie understands Logan's purpose to put her down under his power by tying her to his property. Logan represents a conventional black man who believes that a husband has the rights to control the life of his wife. However, the protagonist, at this point, shows him that wealthy is not the aim of her life. Janie tells him she does not owe him anything for marrying her.

Janie realizes her self-value, but early in the story she does not have a chance to leave Killick until she meets Jody Starks who promises her a change in life. Janie decides to leave Killick and joins Jody in her life journey. She mentions that “Even if Joe was not there waiting for her, the change was bound to do her good” (40). Janie’s self-valuation is firstly raised when she leaves Logan. After the protagonist reaches her self-valuation, she needs to reach her self-definition in order to have a place and voice as a member of a community.

1.2 Self-Definition

Janie faces major life struggle as she tries to raise her voice to be heard as she lives with her second husband, Jody Starks. Janie’s life with Jody starts beautifully but soon Janie notices a negative change. She again has to face male dominated power. Jody who always looks for change and chance is so busy building up the town that he does not realize that Janie exists. Janie soon feels like she sleeping with authority which is Jody himself. She mentions the fading of their love that “The bed was no longer a daisy- field for her and Joe to play in. It was a place where she went and laid down when she was sleepy and tired” (86).

Jody, a man with high ambitious, places himself higher than any other black men, and he wants his wife to be higher than any other black women as well. Jody does not allow Janie to be familiar with the town people. He defines her to be high as his wife. Janie is treated as a valuable property that belongs to Jody. Her inner needs are covered by expensive clothes and money. The position of a mayor’s wife keeps her from being herself. Janie at Eatonville, the black town community, is defined as a high black woman who has honor and money weighs on her shoulders. Her free soul is kept at the bottom of her heart to prevent it from being beaten under Jody’s power.

Janie cannot define herself against the mainstream stereotype of Jody's and the town people.

Jody Starks is very powerful that the town people call him "Our beloved Mayor" but nobody actually believes it just like the saying God is everywhere (59). Since he is so powerful, Jody likes to order his wife to do things. He believes women are not capable of thinking as he says "It would be pitiful if Ah didn't. Somebody got to think for women and chillun and chickens and cows. I god, they sho don't think none themselves" (86).

Although living with her second husband leads her to an oppressed life, Janie tries to re-define herself against negative external definition given by powerful people as Jody and the other black people in town.

Against Jody, Janie provokes women's ability to think just like men. She tries to define herself and black women as capable people who can think. She says "Ah knows uh few things, and womenfolks think sometimes too!" (86).

Again, Janie, after listening to black men criticize black woman who just begs for food from Jody for her children, bravely puts herself into the conversation. She says

Sometimes God gits familiar wid us womenfolks too and takes His inside business. He told me how surprised he was 'bout y'all turning out so smart after Him makin' yuh different; and how surprised y'all is goin'tuh be if you ever find out you don't know half as much 'bout us as you think you do. It's so easy to make yo'self out god Almighty when you ain't got nothin' tuh strain against but women and chickens (91)

The protagonist tries to explain how much better black women really are compared to what they have been defined by other people before. She mentions black men do not know half the truth about black women as Jody does not really know her truly self.

However, Jody who is older and jealous takes Janie's last strength and freedom by telling her to tie her hair up. Hurston presents Janie's hair as a symbol of Janie's power and unconventional identity. None of the black women in town wears their hair down. It shows her strength and defines her individuality. Janie defines herself against the stereotype belief of being a black woman who is expected to dress old and tie her hair up by wearing her long black hair down. The long hair she has is so beautiful that other black women are jealous and some of the black men like to touch it. Jealous Jody notices that and he realizes himself getting older so he forces Janie to tie her hair up and dress like an old black woman. Janie's freedom comes to an end here. Then, it increases after Jody passes away.

Although Janie normally follows Jody's order, she realizes her rights and fights back. Jealous Jody criticizes her appearance in public to make other people look at Janie as an old woman. He says "Tain't no use in gettin' all mad Janie, 'cause Ah mention you ain't no young gal no mo'. Nobody in heah ain't lookin' for no wife outa yuh. Old as you are" (96). Janie feels like somebody snatches off part of her clothes while she is not looking and the street is crowded. She suddenly talks back to him

Naw, Ah aint no young gal no mo' but den Ah ain't no old woman neither. Ah reckon Ah looks my age too. But Ah'm uh woman every inch of me, and Ah know it (96)

Up to this point, the protagonist voices out her self-definition. Janie not only defines her womanhood to Jody but also emphasizes her pride of being a black woman to the town people. Although criticizing Jody's old appearance makes the town people laugh at him and he feels so embarrassed and angry, Janie has herself a great chance to show her visible strength. However, it is the beginning of their long argument until Jody passes away. From her marriage to Jody, Janie learns how to define herself against male power. "She was saving up feelings for some men she had

never seen. She had an inside and an outside now and suddenly she knew how not to mix them” (87). Sometimes, the protagonist feels like all the fight is taken from her soul. She feels so lonely and empty as Hurston describes Janie’s feeling.

She was a rut in the road. Plenty of life beneath the surface but it was kept beaten down by the wheels. Sometimes she stuck out into future, imaging her life different from what it was. But mostly she lived between her hat and her heels” (92).

From the above citation, Hurston presents the image of black women who are beaten to be silent and has to live under men’s power. To survive and not being physically hurt too much by her husband, Janie learns to keep quiet and wait for her chance to come. Finally, Jody faces human limitation; he gets sick and passes away one night. That night Janie looks deep inside herself. She notices the young Janie has gone, leaving her a grown-up woman. She tears the cloth on her head and lets down her plentiful hair. That is the beginning of Janie’s self-liberation originated from her self-valuation and self-definition. Finally, Janie picks her own choice: marrying a young man, Tea Cake whom she believes to be her true love. The protagonist has all the power to destine her own life. At that point, Janie is ready to show other oppressed black women how to survive.

2. The Interlocking Nature of Oppression

Collins, in her concept of a recognition of the interlocking nature of oppression, states that to end black woman’s oppression, the perspective of the community on black women needs to be changed. Moreover, the oppressions among black women need to be shared so that they can understand causes of their oppression. The understanding can also provide the ways to reach liberation. In addition, the interlocking nature of oppression is the process of passing experiences and life lessons among the oppressed black women. The process aims for black

women's better lives.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston presents three black women who connect to the protagonist in different ways. They are Nanny, Annie Tyler, and Pheoby. The connection and relationship with these black women increase Janie's strength.

The protagonist's first life lesson comes from her grandmother, Nanny. Hurston presents Nanny as old, oppressed, and conventional. Nanny is raped and witnesses her daughter, Janie's mother, is raped as well. Nanny's life is under slavery pain which has haunted her and makes her see this world too dangerous for any woman to live alone, especially, a black woman. Old Nanny believes marriage can save any black woman from living miserable life. Black woman will be safe from any trashy nigger (black man) who, as Nanny says, wants to use her body to wipe his foot on (17).

Because of her exploited personal background, Nanny's perspective in life is significantly different from that of Janie. Nanny believes that black woman is "de mule of de world". Mule is the name of an animal that works hard and is not very smart. Because of that image, Nanny does not agree that Janie should try to find her true love so she forces her to marry Logan. Thus, when Janie comes to ask about love after her marriage, Nanny says "You aint got nothing to be shamed of, honey, youse uh married'oman. You got yo'lawful husband same as Mis Washburn or anybody else!" (29). Marriage for Nanny is more like a protection and security while Janie longs for her true love to begin.

Against Nanny's stereotypical belief, Janie searches for love. She describes her feeling of love as a pear tree attracting dust-bearing bee. She tells her grandmother about her feeling to Logan that "Ah wants to want him sometimes. Ah don't want him

to do all de wanting” (30). Finally, Nanny passes away. Janie, knows that her first dream about sweet love is dead so she becomes a woman. Hurston presents Janie’s speech that reveals the feeling that she has to her Nanny after she becomes a grown up woman.

She hated her grandmother and had hidden it from herself all these years under a cloak of pity. She had been getting ready for her great journey to the horizon in search of people; it was important to all the world that she should find them and they find her...She hated the old woman who had twisted her in so in the name of love” (108-109)

The above shows that Janie mentions her youth and chances to live the way she likes are stolen by Nanny’s love. At this point, Hurston successfully explains the nature of women who are in a position that can protect others as mothers to children and grandmothers to grandchildren. As what Nanny does to Janie, the love that meant to protects can harm the loved one.

However the protagonist does not let herself to be like other oppressed black women. She learns lesson from Nanny. She becomes mature and is able to see the differences between her romance and real life. Although Janie marries Logan because of Nanny, she makes her first decision to leave him and seeks her true self. The first decision of her leads to another as she tells her friend, Pheoby, that “Ah done lived Grandma’s way, now Ah means tuh live mine” (138). The protagonist ends up living under conventional lifestyle by marrying Tea Cake, a young man with no money. However, she proves that Nanny’s idea about young trashy nigger is wrong. She does not hesitate to search for her true love when she meets Tea Cake and she finally finds it in him.

The second female character who has a big influence on the protagonist’s self-liberation is Anne Tyler. Mrs. Tyler is a widow who is fifty-two years old. She has a good home and insurance money until Who Fung enters her life. The young man

takes all her money and leaves her. When Janie leaves Eatonville with Tea Cake, the town people believes she will face the same situation as Mrs. Tyler. They believe Janie will be cheated by young Tea Cake as well.

Although Hurston does not show any scene in her novel that Janie and Mrs. Tyler really meet in persons, Janie thinks about the story of Mrs. Tyler and realizes that she herself is in a risky situation of being cheated by a young lover. The miserable experience of being cheated and left by Who Fung that Mrs. Tyler faced makes Janie become aware of and be more careful with Tea Cake. She even hides the money that she brings with her from Eatonville from him. From the exploited experience of Mrs. Tyler, Janie learns to love wisely.

The third female character who can be considered as one of the most important female characters in the story is Pheoby, a black female character who is Janie's long love friend at Eatonville. Janie trusts Pheoby more than anyone else as she says "mah tongue is in mah friend's mouf" (9). It is clear that the protagonist can share any life stories with Pheoby because she trusts her.

"G'wan! G'wan! you must think Ah brought yuh somethin'. When Ah aint brought home a thing but mahself."

"Dat's gracious plenty. Yo' friends wouldn't want nothing better" (7)

The above presents their strong relationship. However, although Janie and Pheoby are close friends, they are very different. Pheoby is a typical black woman who works hard for her family and looks up at Janie as a high woman while Janie is rich, beautiful, and self-confident. Janie always has a will to risk for a dream while Pheoby serves her family and community as a good conventional black woman. Because of her personal background, she sometimes considers some of Janie's decision, for example marrying to young man as Tea Cake is wrong. Pheoby who has to work hard sometimes wishes to be like Janie. She says "still and all Ah'd love tuh experience it

for just one year. It look like heben tuh me from where Ah'm at" (138). Being a mayor's wife, having expensive clothes to wear, and living in a big white house all of which are considered to be like heaven to Pheoby and other black women in town.

At the same time, Janie always observes the fun of being around black folks as Pheoby always does. They both have each other's dream inside and that can be a good reason why they are best friends. The advantage of the two characters' being friends is that they can fulfill each other's life by talking to each other about anything. The experiences shared through their talk lead to their better decision making.

Although Janie's ability to risk a dream sets her to be apart from other women in the novel including Pheoby, that ability certainly awakens Pheoby to look back at her own marriage and quality of her life as she mentions:

Ah done growed ten feet higher jus' listenin' tuh you, Janie. Ah ain't satisfied with myself no mo'. Ah means tuh make Sam take me fishin' wid him after this. Nobody better not criticize you in mah hearin' (230)

Pheoby, from her words above, reveals her self-growth after listening to Janie's story. Pheoby used to be one of the conventional black women as she tried to ask Janie not to marry Tea Cake because he is young and poor. Although she loves her friend so much, Pheoby considers marrying a younger and playful man a bad thing to do. She also expects that Janie would be Mrs. Pheoby also sets her expectation on Janie as a Mrs. Mayor Starks. However, her belief about marriage life and gender issue changes after she listens to Janie's story as she says in the above citation. She says she is not satisfied with herself being a wife at home. She mentions that she is going to join any activities that Sam, her husband, does. It clearly presents the seed of gender equity that Janie grows in Pheoby's heart by just sharing her life story.

However, Janie does not want her friend to follow her thought without thinking as she says:

Pheoby you got tuh go there tuh know there. Yo' papa and yo' mama and nobody else can't tell you and show yuh. Two things everybody's got tuh do fuh theyselves. They got tuh go tuh God, and they got tuh find out about livin' fuh theyselves (230)

The above explains that the protagonist's searching for one own life is as important as searching for God. She says that although it is an experience that can be passed through to others by telling, they still need to take the life journey and experience it by themselves. Although Pheoby learns from Janie's life, she still has to make decision about her own life situation that is different from Janie's.

As Collins mentions in her writing, the experiences and knowledge of black women can be applied to counter forms of subordination and oppression. Janie's knowledge is her power, and this power is passed to Pheoby, her friend, and it can also be shared widely with other black women in town who are interested in Janie's story and waiting to hear about it from Pheoby.

As the protagonist plays checker with Tea Cake at the porch, Hurston reveals black women's power against black men. The game can be considered as Janie's strength and wisdom, and this is the first time seen by other black people in town. Janie gains effort from both men and women to win Tea Cake as they try to coach her during the game.

Up to this point, the writer presents that there is a possibility for black women and men to be equal in life as in the checker game. In addition, as it is a game then there is a chance for women to win as well. The game that Janie plays requires thinking ability that Janie is once criticized by Jody to have none. Hurston wisely presents the checker game as a brain fight that involves no violence. Significantly, she presents a black woman's power against men in public. The power from this perspective is creative and used for the good of oneself and others in the community

(Collins 2).

The life experience that the protagonist gains and shares with other black women has major influence on her self-liberation. Moreover, the protagonist herself gives major change on other women's lives. The life stories that she shares with other black women enriches black women's oral culture and related cultural activities. It empowers her to reach not only personal liberation but also the liberation of all women.

3. The Importance of Afro-American Women's Culture

In Their Eyes Were Watching God, Hurston presents the conventional belief that shapes black woman's images and roles. The image comes with the roles that keep black women from joining cultural activities. Because of gender prejudice, sometimes Eatonville community punishes its women who behave in the way unacceptable for the white standards or culture. The community expects its women to behave as good wives and mothers.

Janie, who is in community's high expectation as she is the mayor's wife, suffers from being kept from contacting and sharing cultural wisdom with other people. Eatonville people expect Janie to be Mrs. Mayor Starks for the rest of her life although Jody passes away. For Eatonville women, Janie is chosen to be higher and richer than them, so she should sacrifice her inner needs and behave right. When Janie behaves differently by stop attending church and has a relationship with Tea Cake, she is criticized, hated, and alienated from the community.

At Eatonville, Hurston presents everyone as a black person who strictly follows the conventional belief. Inevitably, the white people's belief and religion influence their ways of life. The protagonist, who has independent personality, faces

oppression in community level because of her self-belief which is against the town people. Janie feels the pressure from black males, especially her husband who is the town mayor, and each day she gains more envy from the black females who look at her high status and wealth with jealous eyes as Hurston mentions “Janie soon began to feel the impact of awe and envy against her sensibilities.”(57) and “She slept with authority and so she was part of it in the town mind. She couldn’t get but so close to most of them in spirit” (57).

Without contracting with others, Janie is not considered to be one member of the community. She works to serve Jody’s daily needs. Janie has to follow the obligation of being a good wife as she has to tie her long hair up and dress old like other black women in town. She is kept in the store, trying to hear the stories they tell at the porch to release her pain in life.

The attempt of the protagonist to join the community’s cultural activities by being part of it is forbidden as presented when the town people want Janie to speak as Mrs. Mayor Starks at the party, Jody takes the stage himself and says

Thank yuh fuh yo’ compliments, but mah wife don’t know nothin ‘bout no speech-making’. Ah never married her for nothin’ lak dat. She’s uh woman and her place is in de home (53)

The above reflects that in the male favored culture, black women’s voice cannot be raised. Their places, as Jody says, cannot be at any political positions. The protagonist feels the first pressure when her speech is kept. Janie reveals that sometimes she has good stories to tell, but Jody forbids it because he does not want her associating with other black people whom he believed to be trashy people.

However, when Jody passes away, Janie has back her freedom. She talks at the porch conversation, laughs and plays checkers. She realizes she can do all the black cultural activities as well as others. The protagonist feels free of the restrictions that

Joe always places on her until he dies. Janie aims to live the way she wants as she tells her best friend, Pheoby that “‘Tain’t day Ah worries over Joe’s death, Pheoby. Ah jus’ loves dis freedom” (113).

Another cultural issue presented in Their Eyes Were Watching God is the belief that black women need to be protected by men. In the story, there are many black men trying to take Jody’s place of being Janie’s husband after Jody dies. The protagonist is told many times that

Uh woman by herself is a pitiful thing. Dey needs aid and assistance. God never meant ‘em to try tuh stand by theirselves. You ain’t been used tuh knockin’ round and doin’ fuh yo’self, Mis’ Starks. You been well taken keer of, you needs uh man” (110)

Hurston strongly presents gender prejudice through the above words. It is believed that black women need black men in order to be safe and happy. They are expected to be married and let their husbands take care of their lives.

However, Hurston presents that Janie can endure the seduction and persuasion from men. Janie mentions that she likes lonesomeness for a change. For her, freedom is so valuable for her that she does not need any men for shelter. Janie looks at black men with her smart eyes. From experience, she learns it is not love that they aim but her money.

These men didn’t represent a thing that she wanted to know about. She had already experienced them through Logan and Joe. She felt like slapping some of them for sitting around grinning at her like a pack of chessy cats, trying to make out they looked like love (110)

With her wisdom and marriage experience, Janie does not fall into the trap.

However, when Janie seems to like a young man named Tea Cake, everyone in Eatonville starts to criticize her. They believe that a woman living with a much younger man is unacceptable, especially when she is a mayor’s wife. They say “Joe Starks hadn’t been dead for nine months and here she goes sashaying of to a picnic in

ink linen. Done quit attending church like she used to” (133).

The town people expect Janie to show her grief to her husband by wearing black and attending church. Against that belief, she says,

Ah ain’t grieving so why do Ah hafta mourn? Tea Cake love me in blue, so Ah wear it. Jody ain’t never in his life picked out no colors for me. De world picked out black and white for mournin’, Joe didn’t. So Ah wasn’t wearing’ it for him. Ah was weren’t for de rest of y’all (136)

The protagonist mentions that colors are symbols of things that assign black people to behave. Wearing black to show her grief over her husband’s death is one of the expected behaviors that Janie should do. However, Janie prefers following her desire to wear colorful clothes for Tea Cake. Moreover, Janie decides to marry Tea Cake. The protagonist starts her new life with him at Everglades where cultures and people are so different from Eatonville.

Hurston aims to present Everglades as having different culture. The community is multicultural. There are many people who are from different races such as Indians, Africans, and white people. They live and work together.

Janie and Tea Cake’s house is presented as the center of multicultural activities like the porch at Eatonville. Although the house is much smaller than the white house, Janie feels that it is more like home to her. People share stories and experiences. At Everglades, Janie reflects her life in Eatonville. She realizes that in Everglades, she can contribute to the stories people tell. She has a voice there. In addition, she can truly express herself and connect to other people. Janie is very sorry for her friends back there in Eatonville and scornful of the others (162).

At Everglades, Janie is looked at as a smart woman. She can show her ability there. She is accepted as a member of social institutions as both worker and Tea Cake’s wife. The relationship between Janie and her new husband goes well because

they always share their feeling. Janie's winning in the hunting game over Tea Cake is acceptable because Tea Cake respects his wife's ability. Instead of being mad as Jody used to be, Tea Cake is proud of her. The protagonist gains high respect from him as we can see from the way he talks about her to other people. "Mah Janie is uh high time woman and useter things. Ah didn't git her outa de middle uh de road. Ah got her outa uh big fine house" (117).

All the stories and tales that are shared in the novel such as the story of the mules at Eatonville and the tales told at Tea Cake's and Janie's house at Everglades, emphasize the importance of black oral culture on black women's liberation issue. The oral culture or oral tradition is believed to be a way of expressing the pain of being ruled under slavery of the black people in the past. Because of their poor education, black slaves use their speech to reveal their lives. Instead of writing pages of slave history, they tell and sing those out to the world. The oral culture is passed on to newer black generation as in Their Eyes Were Watching God.

Hurston in her novel presents the power of southern culture on black women's liberation by using southern setting, dialect, and folkloric materials. The characters' speech symbolizes the richness of Afro-American oral culture. Hurston presents the black oral culture in a scene at Eatonville when people celebrate their new town,

In between times they told stories, laughed and told more stories and sung songs. They cut all sorts of capers and whiffed the meat as it slowly came to perfection with the seasoning penetrating to the bone. The younger boys had to rig up the sawhorses with boards for the women to use as tables. Then it was after sun-up and everybody not needed went home to rest up for the feast (55)

Hurston presents the unity of black people through their oral culture activities at the party. The black characters pass on their stories through different methods such as acting, gesturing, and singing as presented in the above citation. Through

the protagonist's eyes, the atmosphere of the oral culture among black people is presented as follow,

when people sat around the porch and passed around the pictures of their thoughts for the others to look at and see, it was nice. The fact that the thought pictures were always crayon enlargements of life it even nicer to listen to (62)

Hurston not only presents the story telling culture of the black people in her novel but also reveals the lively tone of blues. Blues's first characteristic is not well defined and is often dated between 1870 and 1900, the period that coincides with Emancipation. The novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God, is widely considered to be a blues romance because of its character of being sensitive, lively and powerful. It is clearly presented through the song that black people sing when they gather to celebrate having their first light lamp in town.

we will walk in de light, de beautiful light
Come where the dew drops of mercy shine bright
Shine all around us by day and by night
Jesus, the light of the world (56)

The song is sung over and over by all of the people "until it was wrung dry, and no further innovations of tone and tempo were conceivable" (56). The song above talks about light, which can be interpreted as freedom and happiness. The blues culture is believed to come to black people's lives after their long live in the darkness of slavery.

The blues culture is presented in many parts of the story even on the nickname of Tea Cake. Tea Cake literally means sweet. Sweet seems to be a major part of relationship that all women desire to have but they rarely get one from their men. Sweet can be considered as a major part of blues as well because blues itself rises from the slaves who live such miserable and bitter lives that they create blues to release the pain of their suffering.

Tea Cake has a full form of a bad man and a lady's man character at the same time. Hurston presents him as a man who has no money but enjoys gambling. The character is as playful as the blues itself. Anytime that he appears on the scene, he brings along with him music and joy.

Tea Cake stood there mimicking the tuning of a guitar. He frowned and struggled with the pegs of his imaginary instrument watching her out of the corner of his eyes with that secret joke playing over his face (121)

From the above citation, Tea Cake represents joy and fun. He is attractive because he knows how to treat women. The unpredictable and charming character of Tea Cake easily wins over other conventional black men in town. Tea Cake can fulfill Janie's lost love and gives her delight as the blues did to the poor black slaves in the past.

The protagonist benefits from blues music that Tea Cake brings to her life. It is clearly that Janie cannot resist dancing along with the lively tunes of love. Blues music is wild, unpredictable, and irresistible. She starts breaking some rules and enjoys it as she says "It was so crazy digging worm by lamb light and setting out for Lake Sabelis after midnight that she felt like a child breaking rules" (123). Blues tradition turns Janie to be more carefree and self-satisfied. Janie decides to marry Tea Cake, leaving a rich life in Eatonville to discover new life in Everglades with him. Janie finally finds her way out of the social expectation. She says "her soul crawls out from its hiding and she feels so self-crushing love" (155).

The liberation that the protagonist reaches at personal level and community level leads her to find her place in social institution level. The experience that the protagonist learns and passes to other oppressed black women strengthens her to live wisely. In addition, becoming a member of the community and being loved by

Tea Cake turns Janie into a strong woman as it is presented at the ending part of the story. After Tea Cake is bitten by a mad dog, he catches rabies. Although Janie takes good care of him, Tea Cake gets worse. He becomes more jealous. Janie, finally, has to shoot Tea Cake to protect herself. In addition, she knows that Tea Cake will regret if he kills her.

The protagonist, alone, can prove herself innocent during the hardest time of her life when she has to kill Tea Cake who catches rabies to prevent him from pain and protect herself from getting killed by him. The protagonist has to go to court to be judged by white people.

According to Collins's writing, it is believed that the social institutions are controlled by the dominant groups such as white supremacy through schools, churches, the media, and other formal organizations including the courts. The dominant groups have been seducing, pressuring, or forcing African American women to replace individual and cultural ways of knowing by giving them new negative image of themselves (Littenberg, 72). It makes black women hate being black and it causes their oppression at every level.

However, Hurston's protagonist, Janie, learns how to get along with people from all races. She is almost alone when Tea Cake is sick because black people want her to be punished. She mentions "it wasn't death she feared. It was misunderstanding" (226). Although black people, especially men, believe she kills Tea Cake to be with another man, Janie proves herself in the highest justice system of the white people. Through her words, evidence, and witness, the white court believes her.

After the jury proves the case, the protagonist is freed after being in jail just for three hours. People smile at her and shook her hands. White women cry and

stand around her like a protecting wall even though some black people still did not believe her at first. However, after she explains to them, black people understand her.

Up to this point, the protagonist becomes as an ambassador who creates understanding between black people and white people. The protagonist gains love and understanding from them in her hardest time of losing her beloved husband. Here, Hurston, again, presents the power of words on black women's liberation. If women have voices, they can stand against any social prejudice.

To emphasize on the difficulty of being liberated, Hurston explains Janie's struggles for self-liberation in a part of her novel that

She had found her jewelry down inside herself and she had wanted to walk where people could see her and glem it around but she had set in the market-place to sell. Been set for still-bail (109).

From the above citation, Janie believes she lost her first self, which she sees it as a jewelry that she wants to show to the world. Her early dream is stolen when she is forced to marry. Although, Janie tries to show her true self to other people, some of them who are more powerful such as Nanny, Logan, and Jody forbid it. Her voice, right, and wisdom are stolen from her. However, as the novel progresses, her self-liberation is revealed. Janie, who trusts in her dream, successfully reaches her self-liberation.

So Ah'm back home again and Ah'm satisfied tuh be here. Ah done been tuh de horizon and back and now Ah kin set heah in mah house and live by comparisons. Dis house ain't so absent of things lak it used tuh be befo' Tea Cake come along. It's full uh thoughts, specially dat bedroom (229)

After taking long life journey as she wishes, the protagonist finds her place of happiness. She feels satisfied with what she has and what she can pass to others. Janie mentions she is back to her house and she is going to live the rest of her life with no

regrets. Hurston's significant passage on black women's liberation issue to her readers is successfully presented through Janie's life journey.

Chapter 4

An Analysis of Black Women In Quest of Liberation through Cilie, the Female Protagonist in The Color Purple

In the novel, The Color Purple, Alice Walker presents the oppressed life of Cilie, the black female protagonist, and the way she reaches her liberation. Through Janie's life, Walker reveals the struggles of a black woman who has an exploited family background and lives in a male-dominated society.

1. An Emphasis of Self-Valuation and Self-Definition

Cilie, the black female protagonist, faces all kinds of oppression because of her exploited personal background. She lives in a poor black family. Cilie's father is lynched, and she is raped by her step father when she is fourteen. Walker presents that Cilie is violated and oppressed.

first he put his thing up against my hip and sort of wiggle it around. Then he grab hold my titties. Then he push his thing inside my pussy. When that hurt, I cry. He start to choke me, saying You better shut up and git used to it (1-2)

From the above citation, Cilie is physically and mentally exploited. She is threatened to be silent. Moreover, when she has children, Pa, her step father who rapes her, takes one of them to kill and sells other children to people. All the women in Cilie's family are too weak to help her. They live under Pa's power. Pa forces Cilie to marry Mr_____, a man who does not love her. Because of Cilie's appearance and characteristics, Pa believes that Cilie is too stupid to study. He takes her out of her school to be married. Walker presents that Cilie is totally ignored and invisible because she spends most of her life serving other people.

Therefore, when Kate who is her husband's sister tells her to fight, Cilie hopelessly gives it up and tells God in her letter that "I think about Nettie, dead. She fight, she run away. What good it do? I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive" (22).

Walker presents that the miserable personal background is a major factor that shapes the protagonist's perspective in life. The protagonist becomes hopeless when she sees no good result of fighting. She prefers being silent to being beaten. Cilie's image of men is negative as she is so scared of them as she says "I don't even look at mens. That's the truth. I look at women, tho, cause I'm not scared of them" (6). This quotation reveals that Cilie feels frightened of men. In addition, Cilie is traded by her step father to Mr. _____. Pa tells Mr. _____ about Cilie that

You can do everything you want to and she ain't gonna make you feed or clothe it. She ain't smart either, and I'll just be fair, you have to watch her or she'll give away everything you own. But she can work like a man (9)

Pa tries to persuade Mr. _____ to take Cilie to be his wife. Cilie stands there and turn around once in a while to let Mr. _____ see her better before he makes decision. The two male characters who clearly are more powerful than the protagonist value her as she is not a human being. The protagonist is speechless. Although she does not want to get married, she is unable to resist them. Her self is continuously lost from that point.

Although Cilie is married and goes off to live with Mr. _____ who is her husband, she is not treated or valued as a wife or mother of Mr. _____'s children. They hate her and beat her anytime they can. The protagonist's oppression in personal level shapes her negative perspective on marriage life. Cilie's has no affectionate feeling to her husband as she does not know his name at first. She calls him Mr. _____. Although she is his wife, Mr. _____ never gives her anything. He

beats her down to work for him.

He say, Cilie, git the belt. The children be outside the room peeking through the cracks. It all I can do not to cry. I make myself wood. I say to myself, Cilie, you a tree. That's how come I know trees fear man" (23)

The above citation presents the daily violence that Cilie has to face. Walker describes Cilie's feeling that she tries to turn herself mentally into wood or a tree to deal with the pain. However, she still feels so painful. It is clear that the protagonist does not feel secured in her marriage life as she is valued as a laborer of the family not a wife or mother. The protagonist lives to serve her husband and his family's needs. This pain makes Cilie to believe that she is too ugly and stupid to be loved or to ask for something from other people.

The protagonist's loss of her self-valuation creates her oppression in personal level. Cilie tends to live each day with no goal in her life. From the story, she never mentions being rich, or happy. The protagonist is lonely, especially when she has no news from her beloved sister, Nettie. None of the people she knows really loves her. In order to survive, Cilie hides her untellable pain in her letters to God. Cilie relies on God as her shelter. Her image of God is like a supreme powerful person as an old white man. Walker presents religion as another dominant power that shapes black women's ways of life. Religion praises the tamed member and beats the rebellious one down.

The protagonist's point of view on herself is worse when time passes. She always compares herself to other women and feels miserable and self-disappointed. She once watches Shug in her singing show and compares herself to charming Shug.

It hurt me so, I cover it with my hand. I think I might as well be under the table, for all they care. I hate the way I look, I hate the way I'm dress. Nothing but churchgoing clothes in my chifferobe... before I know it, tears meet under my chin (77)

The protagonist feels so ashamed of being ugly and stupid. She, at this point, loses her

self-valuation. She puts herself lower than other people and becomes self-hatred.

1.1 Self-Valuation

However, Cilie, through her life experience, learns to value and re-define herself against the dominant powers. Although Cilie and Shug does not get along very well at first because Shug does not like Cilie as she is Mr. _____'s wife, Cilie's self-valuation firstly increases after she meets Shug. Shug represents the strength that Cilie has inside herself but never realizes its existence. Walker presents Cilie talking to Shug through a mirror as Shug reflects the strong hidden side of Cilie. The protagonist, who never examines her body and enjoys it, is naked in front of Shug. She looks into herself in the mirror to see the physical beauty that she never looks. Because of her exploited experience about being raped, Cilie seems to be afraid of being a woman. It can be a reason why she never looks at her womanhood. The protagonist's seeing her naked body leads her to love and value herself better. In addition, Shug teaches Cilie how to sexually satisfy herself. At this point, the protagonist learns about womanhood and knows how to reach self-satisfaction. It can be seen as the first step of her self-valuation because she starts valuing herself as a woman who worth being loved at least by herself later on.

Secondly, the protagonist's anger on Mr. _____ who hides numbers of letters from her sister increases her self-valuation as she wants to fight and kill him "I watch him so close, I begin to feel a lightening in the head. Fore I know anything I'm standing hind his chair with his razor open" (125). Cilie knows that she cannot stand Mr. _____ anymore and she needs to revenge. However, Shug helps her to realize that she is more valuable to her home coming sister. Cilie decides to start working instead of killing Mr. _____ as she says "A needle not a razor in my hand" (153). The protagonist wins her dark flaw and improves her self-valuation. She knows that

she is worth so much for her sister and family that she decides not to take violent way to end her problem with Mr. _____.

In addition, Cilie's self-valuation is emphasized when she finds her talent to make clothes. Cilie starts making clothes for others, then for herself, and finally she aims to do business out of it. "One day when Shug come home, I say, you know, I love doing this, but I got to git out and make a living pretty soon. Look like this just holding me back" (220). With Shug's help, Cilie decides to work to earn her own living.

At this point, Walker presents the protagonist's realization on her ability and value from her above speech. More importantly, she brings her talent to her living. The protagonist not only re-values herself but also starts to re-define her place in the society as well.

1.2 Self-Definition

Black women's oppression at the personal level starts from when they are tamed to be silent under the dominant people in the society, mostly by black men. They are told or forced to do things with their mouth shut and their thought ignored. Most of Walker's women in The Color Purple are defined as helpless and weak, especially the protagonist. The male characters in the story are all powerful. Black female characters are not able to define themselves as they wish. They are forced to serve male's basic needs. Cilie works for Mr. _____ in his farm and house. She takes care of his children and Shug who is his lover. Cilie has to sleep with him when he wants to. The protagonist is defined as stupid, ugly, poor and all the negative definition. Her self-definition is totally forbidden. However, Cilie's self-valuation that is increased prepares her the drives to reach her self-definition.

Although Cilie is poor, oppressed, hopeless, and passive, she shows other people

that she exists. When Cilie realizes that Mr. _____ steals her only hope and ruins her life by hiding all the letters from Nettie to her, she starts speaking up. She voices her rights and reveals Mr. _____'s evil secret in front of everyone. It is the first time that Mr. _____ feels shameful not Cilie. The protagonist says to him before she leaves for Memphis with Shug that "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 just the welcome mat I need" (207). It is the first time that she is brave enough to talk back to him and clearly defines herself against his power. At this point, Cilie tells everyone that she is ready to live her own life. Although Mr. _____ tries to stop her by telling her that he will not give her any money to live, Cilie reminds him that she never asks for anything from him.

The anger that is presented through Cilie's words is so surprising that other people are all quiet. Walker describes the scene that "All around the table folkses mouths be dropping open" (207). When Mr. _____ reaches to slap her face, she jab her case knife in his hand. Cilie shows that she is not a stupid woman that cannot think or fight. She just tries to live her own life, but at the same time if it is necessary or unbearable, she can fight back. Cilie uses all the scornful words that Mr. _____ used to use with her to hurt him back.

Furthermore, the protagonist defines herself significantly by saying "I'm pore. I'm black, I maybe ugly and can't cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I'm here" (214). The definition of being poor ugly black woman is given to Cilie, but she does not approve it. She mentions her presence there as a woman and as she says it she is not scared of Mr. _____ anymore. Cilie mentions her feeling in her letter to homecoming Nettie that "I am so happy. I got love. I got work, I got friends and time. And you alive and be home soon. With our children" (222). The protagonist is fully

self-defined here as she strongly repeats “I” to emphasize her self-strength. She reaches social status that she deserves after working hard for it.

The success of the protagonist on her self-valuation and self-definition cannot be achieved without the assistance from other black women in the story who connect to Cilie in different ways and different time in her life.

In addition, Walker presents the success as a set of knowledge that Cilie takes, gives and passes to other oppressed black women to assist them on their own fighting. It creates a significant power that is called the power of sisterhood which is raised from women’s oppressed experience sharing.

2. The Interlocking Nature of Oppression

The interlocking process is an attempt to understand the nature of oppression. The process can be done by sharing and passing experiences among community members. According to feminist concept of black women’s liberation, female ties take many forms: some are motherly or sisterly, some are in the form of mentor and pupil, some are sexual, and some are simply friendship. Walker presents all the possible ties that black women have to resist their oppressions and gain liberations.

Throughout The Color Purple, Walker portrays female relationships that empower black women in the novel to reach their liberation. The life experiences that they share allow them to resist oppression and dominance. In addition, the relationship forms a refuge and provides love and strength against the society filled with male dominance. In the study, the relationships among the protagonist, Cilie, and other four important female characters that are Nettie, Sofia, Shug Avery, and Marry Agnes, are analyzed to better understand the success of Cilie’s liberation.

2.1 Cilie and Nettie

Walker, in her novel, presents Nettie, a black female character to be as an ideal black woman who achieves her self-liberation through education. In contrast, she presents Cilie to be uneducated, oppressed and weak. The protagonist who believes herself to be ugly and stupid looks up at her sister, Nettie, as an ideal woman as she says “It nearly kill me to think she might marry someone like Mr. _____ or wind up in some white lady kitchen. All day she read, she study, she practice her handwriting, and try to git us to think” (17).

Nettie portrays the dream that Cilie and any other oppressed black women try to have but seems to be out of their reach. She takes her life journey to trace her ancestors’ root and help African people in Africa. However, Nettie will never get the opportunity to do that without Cilie’s support. Cilie protects Nettie from being exploited as it is presented in her words to God when Pa seems to have interest on Nettie. “I see him look at my little sister. She scared. But I say I’ll take care of you. With God help” (4). “I ast him to take me instead of Nettie while our new mammy sick” (8). From the citation, it is clear that Cilie sacrifices herself to save her sister. We can see that the protection is also from Nettie to Cilie because she always tells Cilie to study and fight. Using education as a weapon, Nettie tries to save both of them. However, she can only get herself out of the miserable situation. After Nettie leaves, she tries to write Cilie but Mr. _____ keeps all the letters. It makes Cilie become more hopeless as she mentions she has no reason to live and fight.

However, when the protagonist knows that her sister is still alive, she becomes stronger and hopeful. Nettie’s presence brings back all the dreams that fulfill Cilie’s life. She feels she wants to fight and kills Mr. _____. Cilie starts her education again through Nettie’s letters. She learns about the world outside the kitchen and the

field that she works. Nettie has good ability in describing and teaching, so she can pass on her knowledge to her older sister through her words clearly.

The knowledge about their ancestors' lives from many letters that Nettie writes to Cilie broadens Cilie's view on herself. She understands the root of gender prejudice. From Nettie's letters, African women in America face gender prejudice as well. The African people that Nettie serves as a missionary don't believe in educating women (162). After reading letters from Nettie, the protagonist becomes more thoughtful. She relies more on herself and other black women around her. Although Cilie used to be so helpless that she believes that only God can save her from her life suffering, she after seeing God through different views understands that she has to rely on herself first. Thus, Cilie stops writing to God. It is a big change in the protagonist's ways of thinking. She starts writing to Nettie who really exists and brings her hope. She finds God ignores her prayers by letting her life being more miserable. She starts writing to Nettie instead of to God as she says "Dear Nettie, I don't write to God no more. I write to you". It reveals that black women can heal each other's wounded heart by sharing their life experiences.

2.2 Cilie and Sofia

The second female character that connects to Cilie is Sofia, a strong black woman. While Cilie is so weak and helpless, Sofia is independent and aggressive. Sofia's strength is what Cilie lacks. The protagonist witnesses Sofia's strong personality when she firstly meets her when Harpo takes Sofia home to meet his father. Mr. _____, who immediately does not like Sofia, says that he will never let Harpo marry her. However, Sofia is not scared of him. She talks right back.

But she laugh. She glance at Harpo sitting there with his head down and his hands between his knees. She says What I need to marry Harpo for? He still living here with you. What food and clothes he git, you buy" (33)

From Sofia's words to Mr. _____, it is clear she is stronger than Harpo and she does not want to sacrifice her life by marrying a weak man. Cilie is so impressive with the strength that Sofia has. Although Sofia is Harpo's wife and she has to move in to live with him, she does not let him beat her as Mr _____ does to Cilie. Instead of working hard and turning herself into a tree when her husband beats her as Cilie does, Sofia fights to death as a scene when they fight (39). The fighting between Sofia and Harpo is caused by Cilie's envy. The protagonist who is always beaten by Mr. _____ tells Harpo to beat Sofia as well. However, Cilie feels so sinful and admits it to Sofia. She confesses that she tells Harpo to beat Sofia because she is jealous that Sofia can fight while she is always beaten down. "I say it cause I'm a fool, I say. I say it cause I'm jealous of you. I say it cause you do what I can't" (42).

The different personal backgrounds lead the two female characters to have different ways of living. Although they both are from exploited families where men rule, Sofia and her sisters stuck together and fight back as she says.

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. But I never thought I'd have to fight in my own house. She let out her breath. I love Harpo, she say. God knows I do. But I'll kill him before I let him beat me (42)

Sofia has long experience in fighting to survive. On the contrary, Cilie has only one sister who truly loves her but her sister, Nettie, is too young and weak to fight. Before Cilie knows how to fight, she is physically and mentally exploited. She becomes too weak and hopeless as she tells Sofia about fighting that "I never struck a living thing" (43).

Sofia and all her sisters are the first strong black women whom Cilie meets. To Cilie, they are very strong and look like the Amazons women (71). However, Cilie learns that Sofia's strength can cause her trouble if she uses it against people who

have more power such as white people. When Sofia meets the white mayor and his wife, she cannot stand their racist behavior. When the mayor wife asks Sofia to be her maid, Sofia said “Hell no”. It is clear that she cannot hold her tongue and behave the way they like. Instead of trying to avoid violence, Sofia knocks the mayor down when he slaps her (90). After that her entire life is ruined. She is sentenced to be in prison for twelve years and cannot meet her children.

Sofia’s aggressive personality becomes her weakest point that leads her to miserable life. She becomes more speechless as she tells Cilie when she is in prison that, “Every time they ast me to do something, Miss Cilie, I act like I’m you. I jump right up and do just what they say” (93).

Sofia’s above conversation with Cilie reflects her opinion on Cilie poor life’s status. Sofia is physically in prison, but she always longs for freedom and never gives up fighting as in her mind she always wants to kill white people and gets away. Cilie is physically freed but mentally in prison of her husband because she cannot fight for her life.

Through Sofia, Walker presents major message on racial prejudice. Sofia mentions she is like a slave of the white people.

They got me in a little storeroom up under the house, hardly bigger than Odessa’s porch, and just about as warm in winter time. I’m at they beck and call all night and all day. They won’t let me see my children. They won’t let me see no mens. Well, after five years they let me see you once a year. I’m a slave, she say. What would you call it (108)

From the above citation, Sofia reveals the pain of being kept in prison as a slave. This part of the novel presents the existence of slavery in American society which has big influence on black women’s lives. Walker’s emphasizes on racial prejudice in Miss Millie conversation to Sofia, “Have you ever seen a white person and a colored sitting side by side in a car, when one of ‘em wasn’t showing the other one how to drive it or

clean it? ". The mayor's wife does not allow Sofia to sit by her side because Sofia is black. It is clear that black women not only are oppressed by black men, but they can also be exploited by white people both males and females.

Sofia passes on her experience about racial prejudice to Cilie when Sofia is in the prison. From Sofia, the protagonist learns to fight wisely. Sofia's failure teaches her that sometimes violence is not a good way to solve problem. Sofia spends most of her life fighting so she is injured. Her life is almost totally ruined.

Cilie, although she cannot fight for Sofia much, she assists Sofia as a good listener and friend. Cilie seems to understand Sofia's loss of freedom most because she is mentally kept under Mr. _____'s power as well. The protagonist passes her life of being a speechless and hopeless wife to Sofia which makes Sofia feels better about herself. Sofia learns to be patient and calm from Cilie. The two oppressed black women are stronger from assisting and learning from each other.

2.3 Cilie and Shug Avery

Although Walker presents the relationship of many female characters, the relationship between the protagonist and Shug Avery is considered to be the most important. Their connection is developed throughout the story and it brings about Cilie's gradual redemption and attainment a sense of self.

Shug Avery, with her strong personality, is the most liberated female character in the story. She is sexually liberated than many other females. Shug has affair with many men and enjoys her sexuality with no restraints or feeling guilty. The protagonist learns how to satisfy herself from Shug, especially on sexual needs. Shug sometimes talks like a man as she said to Sofia "Shug say, Girl, you look like a good time, you do" (85). Shug does not talk about beauty but she talks about other women's appearance in good way. She gives compliment to other women

Firstly, Shug Avery who is Mr. _____'s former lover treats Cilie as a servant because she still likes Mr. _____. Walker presents Shug's feeling to Cilie at the first time when they meet: "She look over me from head to foot. Then she crackle. Sound like a death rattle. Your sure is ugly, she say, like she ain't believed it" (48). Because of jealousy, Shug Avery acts as she is Cilie's enemy as what she does to Harpo's mother who is Mr. _____'s former's wife. Cilie compares Shug to a snake which symbolizes danger and strength.

However, the protagonist has positive feeling with Shug. Cilie admires Shug because she is a beautiful, unique and strong woman.

Under all the powder her face black as Harpo. She got long pointed nose and big fleshy mouth. Lips look like black plum. Eyes big, glossy. Feverish. And mean. Like sick as she is, if a snake cross her path, she kill it." (48) She sicker than my mama was when she die. But she more evil than my mama and that keep her alive" (49)

From the above citation, the strength that Shug has is what keeps her alive through many struggles.

The first story Cilie and Shug share is about their children. They talk about their children while they are in personal place as in the bath (51-52). In the private space, it is easier for them to share their experiences because they are out of their men's power. Although Shug's children are not sold to others as Cilie's, they do not live with her. The two characters share the same pain of being separated from their love ones. However, Shug tries to hind it under her strength by saying she does not miss her children. Walker presents that Cilie's relationship with Shug continuously grows.

I work on her as she a doll or like Olivia- or like she mama. I comb and pat, comb and pat. First, she say hurry up and git finish. Then she melt down a little and lean against my knees. That feel just right, she say. That feel like mama used to do. Or maybe not mama. Maybe grandma. She reach for another cigarette. Start to hum a little tune. She hum alittle more. Something come to me, she say. Something I made up. Something you help scratch out my head (55)

Cilie, at this point, heals Shug wounded heart. They both remind each other of their beloved women such as their children, mothers, and grandmother. Shug and Cilie share a nurturing and caring bond. Walker presents Shug naked in front of Cilie by many wise reasons. Firstly, to show Shug's truly self which can lead to Cilie's. Moreover, it represents weak woman like Cilie can help strong woman as Shug, too. The differences between the two characters do not keep them from caring each other, on the contrary, it fulfills their lives.

However, the relationship grows stronger when they have sexual relationship. They are not only friends but also lovers. Cilie experiences sexual exploitation as she is raped and beaten. Although Shug has many lovers, she does not have anyone who can truly stand for her. Shug used to love Mr. _____ so much, but he is too weak to protect her. Cilie and Shug are disappointed with and exploited by their men so they are easily falls in each other's arms. When they are in bed together, Cilie starts telling Shug about how she is sexually exploited by her step father and Mr. _____. Shug feels so sorry for her and that leads to their sexual relationship.

She say, I love you, Miss Cilie. And then she haul off and kiss me on the month. Um, she say like she surprise. I kiss her back, say um, too. Us kiss and kiss till us can't hardly kiss no more. Then we touch each other (118)

From the above citation, Cilie mentions they both act like a long lost baby (118).

They are two oppressed black women who find shelter in each other. Shug who is stronger shows her protection to Cilie as she says "I won't leave she say, until I know Albert won't even think about beating you (79)." Cilie becomes stronger after meeting Shug as well.

As a good friend, Shug Avery takes major role in changing the protagonist's view on her life. She tells Cilie that Mr. _____ hides many letters from Nettie. It is the point that the protagonist wants to kill Mr. _____ for doing such a cruel thing.

She mentions:

All day long I act just like Sofia. I stutter. I mutter to myself. I stumble bout the house crazy for Mr. _____ blood. In my mind he falling dead every which a way. By time night come, I can't speak. Everytime I open my mouth nothing come out but a little burb (125)

The protagonist, with Shug's help, does not physically harm Mr. _____ but her anger leads her to fight. For the first time, she decides to take a life journey by going to Memphis with Shug (207).

Moreover, Shug Avery gives Cilie a new life when she suggests Cilie to do a clothes business. After leaving Mr. _____, Cilie has more time to spend on her own interest. She starts making pants while Shug is singing. Their relation is strong because Shug respects Cilie as her friend not a servant as she says "You are not my maid. I didn't bring you to Memphis to be that. I brought you here to love you and help you get on your feet" (218).

Not only does Cilie benefit from their relationship, Shug does as well. Shug becomes gentler to other black women who are inferior to her. She used to be cruel to them and wants to win them. Sometimes, Shug uses her charm to win their men as she did to Mr. _____'s former wife. She sleeps with him and totally steals him from his family. At this point, Walker strongly presents the concept of sisterhood that women should treat each other like friend not enemy. While Shug represents all the loved ones that are gone from Cilie's life including mother, sister, lover and friend, Cilie also fulfills Shug's life by openly sharing her life experience. Shug learns to have mercy on other oppressed women. Although she is more beautiful and confident, she always tries to help other oppressed black women who are Cilie, Squeak, and Sofia.

2.4 Cilie and Mary Agnes (Squeak)

Marry Anges is a minor character in the story. She is the woman whom Harpo

takes up after Sofia leaves him and who later goes off with Shug's former husband, Grady, to be a blue singer and drug dealer up North. The character is important in that she provides another picture of assertiveness and supports for her fellow women as she tries to help Sofia who is Harpo's former wife. Squeak endures the degradation of rape by her white uncle when she goes to him to help release Sofia from jail. After she is raped, she comes back home and talks to Harpo.

"Harpo". She say. "Do you really love me, or just my color?"

Harpo say. "I love you, Squeak" He kneel down and try to put his arms around her waist.

She stand up. "My name Mary Agnes, she say" (102)

From the citation, the character defines herself as Mary Agnes not Squeak and she starts to sing blues music. "First, she sing Shug's songs, then she begin to make up songs her own self" (103). Moreover, she tells Harpo that she wants to leave to be a blue singer (209).

Cilie observes Squeak's fighting through her voice which can symbolize her existence. People see Squeak through her songs and she talks to them through her singing. She has a creative talent as a good blues singer. With Shug's help, Squeak, has a career for herself. Mary Agnes is in the circle of women whose strength and the nature of their relationship prevent them from being more oppressed. She learns from every woman around her even weak Cilie. Mary Agnes's strength increases after she is raped. Her experience can teach Cilie to look back at her own case. Finally, both of them leave their husbands to Memphis with Shug and live freely.

The unity of female characters in the novel is emphasized in the conversation among the characters when Cilie and Mary Agnes decide to leave their husbands to discover their lives. Mr. _____ says people will blame them if they leave their

family. Shug asks why women need to care what people talk about them and Grady who is Shug's husband says that "A woman can't git a man if peoples talk"(208). After Grady says that, all the female characters laughs as they think his idea about men's importance is absurd.

Shug look at me and us giggle. Then us laugh sure nuff. Then Squeak start to laugh. Then Sofia. All of us laugh and laugh. Shug say, Aint they something? Us say um hum, and slap the table, wipe the water from our eyes (208)

From the above citation, the women related to the protagonist seem to have the same idea about women's conventional roles, and they think it is ridiculous to care about trying to get a man or husband. From their marriage life experience, being married does not worth trying because it does not always bring happiness to their lives. Walker presents the women having the same understanding, so they laugh at Grady's narrow idea on women's needs. The power of sisterhood is important as it is the factor that strengthens black oppressed women to reach their liberation.

3. The Importance of Afro-American Women's Culture

According to Collins's writing on black women's liberation, the last key theme of black women's liberation is the recognition of black women on the importance of their culture and knowledge. Collins mentions that the advantage of knowing culture is that it may assist black women to see the circumstances that shape race, class and gender oppression and ways to end the issue (Collins 163). In Walker's The Color Purple, black women's ways of life are presented.

Walker strongly reveals the solid image of black women as house keepers and laborers of the family which creates the conventional roles that black women have to strictly follow. The roles of being mothers, daughters, sisters and wives, excel their

places to be mostly in the kitchen and the fields. Walker's female characters in The Color Purple react to the given roles in different ways. Some of them are tamed to ignore their own happiness. On the contrast, some of them resist the rules by fighting for their rights. The result is that they are punished by the society. Shug Avery is hated by the town people because she sleeps with many men and Sofia has to go to jail because she fights the racist white mayor. In addition, Ms. Bealey who is a teacher is single because no men want to marry a school teacher like her. Some of the black men, as Pa says, think she knows too much.

Walker presents black men's perspective on women's roles through Harpo's conversation with Kate who is one of his Aunts as follows:

"Harpo, she say. Harpo, don't let Cilie be the one bring in all the water. You a big boy now. Time for you to help out some"

"women work" he say.

why? She say.

"women work. I'm a man" (22).

From the above citation, Harpo, like other black men, denies helping Cilie who is his step mother. Mr. _____ who is his father is an example of a man who believes working is women's responsibility. Mr. _____ never really works on the field. He passes the belief of men's power over women to Harpo as he teaches him that "Well how you spect to make her mind? 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" (37). Mr. _____, like Pa, uses violence to control his women.

The gender prejudice in black culture exploit black women's rights to live on their own. Walker presents some women from her novel such as Cilie's mother and Harpo's real mother or even Cilie herself to suffer till death from working and being

treated miserably. They are beaten down under men's power.

Religion is another powerful factor that shapes black women's lives as the roles of black women in black community. Religion sets roles that identify each member of the community, and to strengthen the roles, the punishment is created. Walker's protagonist, Cilie, is a very religious person because God is the only one she talks to in her hard time. Cilie always serves God by going to church. Cilie describes how she devotes herself to religion:

I keep my head up best I can. I do a right smart for the preacher. Clean the floor and windows, make the wine, wash the altar linen. Make sure there's wood for the stove in wintertime. He call me Sister Celie. Sister Cilie, he say, Your faithful as the day is long (45)

Cilie tries to behave well, and she is so scared to do bad thing. When she tells Harpo to beat Sofia, she feels sin. "A little voice say, Something you done wrong. Somebody spirit you sin against. Maybe" (41). Cilie's belief in religion forms her ways of living. "Couldn't be mad at my daddy. Bible say, Honor father and mother no matter what" (43-44). It is clear that Cilie gives up her fighting because she is afraid of sin.

Although her step father rapes her, Cilie does not tell anyone but God because the Bible teaches her to always honor parents. The conventional belief in God shuts her mouth up from voicing for her rights. At this point, Walker reveals the power of religion on the protagonist's life.

Another reason that Cilie has to turn her face to God instead of people around her is that talking about her sexual abuse is forbidden by her step father as Walker presents in the first line of the novel "You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy" (1). The black oral culture is kept from the protagonist, so she starts talking to God.

Cilie's God is, as she discusses with Shug, that "He big and old and tall and greybearded and white. He wear white robes and go barefooted." (201). Cilie blindly

serves her God because God whom she believes in scares her as men do. She relies on him although he never helps her in her struggle. However, after discussing about God with Shug, Cilie starts questioning about him. She realizes her God is not helpful as she says.

Yeah, I say, and he give me a lynched daddy, a crazy mama, a lowdown dog of step pa and a sister I probably won't see even again. Anyhow, I say the God been writing to is a man. And act just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgetful and lowdown (199)

From the above citation, Cilie shows her anger on God. At this point she puts him in the group of men that treats her cruelly.

On the contrary, Shug's God is more real. Cilie writes that Shug says, "It pisses God off if a person walks past the color purple and does not marvel at it" (203). Shug's God is a part of everything. Although the color purple is just a small thing but it is worth noticing and enjoying because it exists. Walker, at this point, deeply presents the value of every single living thing including someone as invisible as Cilie. After talking to Shug, Cilie's view on God changes. Cilie realizes that God is in every good thing she does and everywhere she is. The protagonist now understands that she doesn't need to attend church to serve God. She just needs to be happy and enjoys living, so Cilie stops writing to God.

However, Walker presents the novel through story telling style. This emphasizes the power of black oral culture on black women's lives. Since Cilie stops talking to God, she starts her talking again with other black women whom she meets in different situation. When she works in the field and makes her quilt with Sofia, Cilie shares her life story with her. After that Cilie shares her life stories with other black women and she gains knowledge from the sharing. Walker, through Cilie's letter to God, also presents spoken language in the story through written form. All the letters presented

in the novels are great story telling tools that reveal various life struggles both succeeded and failed ones.

Another African American culture that has big influence on black women's life is blues culture. In many scenes of The Color Purple, Walker presents blues through singing and dancing activities. When Shug starts to sing, she is with Cilie in the bath. Cilie describes the song, "Sound low down dirty to me. Like what the preacher tell you its sin to hear. Not to mention sing" (55). This is the characteristic of blues. As blues is the music that is created by black slaves in the past, it reveals both good and bad sides of life. The music reveals the truth about black people's life and it is a way to release the pain of being slaves. Shug Avery, as a blues singer, brings the freedom of blues to Cilie's soul. Walker presents the power of blues over black people's lives when they all gather to listen to Shug's singing. Shug sings Bessie Smith's song called "A Good Man Is Hard to Find". Bessie Smith is one of the most powerful blues singers. She is called the "Empress of the Blues". The song "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" emphasizes gender prejudice in The Color Purple. The song clearly reveals that black women feel it is hard for them to find good men to live with.

Moreover, Shug makes a blues song for Cilie which is called "Miss Cilie's Song". The song also reveals the protagonist's poor and suffering life that is caused by men. It is the first time someone makes something out of her name, so Cilie feels so good that she starts humming along with the tunes (77). Walker reveals that through music and lyrics, women show their needs and strength. Besides Shug, Mary Agnes is another female character who presents blues culture through her songs. Because she is half black and white, she sings about skin colors.

They calls me yellow
Like yellow be my name

They call me yellow

Like yellow be my name

But if yellow is a name
Why ain't black the same

Well, if I say Hey Black girl
Lord, she try to ruin my game (104)

The song emphasizes racial prejudice as it talks about people's skin colors. She talks about how people call other people by their skin colors create different social status and racial prejudice.

Throughout the story, we observe the protagonist's self-growth until she reaches her self-liberation. Cilie, after spending most of her life serving other people, especially men, finally finds her own place in the world. She starts seeing herself more valuable and re-defines her own definition. Then she learns from other oppressed black women's experiences. Through her life experiences, she proves that she is not a useless woman. She also gains more knowledge about black women's culture that assists her to understand the root of herself better. Although the protagonist seems to rely on other people to fight at first, she, later on, stands on her own foot. Although a black woman doing a business seems almost impossible in a black conventional society, Cilie has her clothe business. She has a house and most importantly, she has her family back. She is now a liberated and happy woman.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Discussion

The study examines Janie's and Cilie's ways of reaching their liberation by applying Patricia Hill Collins's concept of black women's liberation. The study reveals that oppressed black women can reach their liberation against unjust dominant powers through three different levels of liberation.

1. Conclusion

According to the analysis of this study, the protagonist attains power of self, sisterhood, and knowledge and cultures. Each power provides victory at each stage of their liberation as presented in this conclusion.

1.1 An Emphasis of Self-Valuation and Self-Definition

From the discussion in the pervious chapters, Janie and Cilie experience different exploited personal biographies. Their backgrounds lead them to face oppression in different ways. In Their Eyes Were Watching God, Janie Crawford spends her childhood with her grandmother, and she is forced to marry an old man. The marriage totally ends her dream of finding a true love and free life.

Although Alice Walker's Cilie in The Color Purple is also forced to be married, she faces worse experience. Cilie is sexually assaulted by the man she believes to be her father. Moreover, when her mother dies, her step father marries Cilie to a man she calls Mr. _____. Apart from being different in their childhood environments, Cilie and Janie are also different in education. Cilie is taken from school so she loses all her ways to fight. Janie is raised among white people and she is educated. While Janie is expected to be rich and have high status in the society, Cilie is forced to work hard

and serve other people. Cilie is physically, verbally, and mentally abused.

However, from the previous chapters, it is presented that although the two protagonists are from different personal backgrounds, they can be liberated. Their liberation starts when they firstly realize their values.

1.1.1 Reaching Self-Valuation

Janie, with her strong personality, is able to walk away from Logan Killicks and Jody Starks who are her husbands when she realizes that she has higher value than their property. Janie longs for a change. The self-love or self-valuation that she realizes at this stage strengthens her to be stronger and mature. The educated protagonist values herself as a woman who is capable enough to reach and fight the unjust power of men. She proves it by leaving her wealth to live with a man she believes to be her true love.

On the contrary, Cilie needs other factors to reach her own valuation. She relies on love from other black women, especially, Shug Avery. Shug introduces Cilie to investigate the value inside herself. Then, Cilie breaks some conventional rules by sleeping with Shug and refusing to have sexual intercourse with her husband.

Another factor that assists Cilie to realize her self-valuation is her anger on Mr. _____'s cruelty. The anger increases Cilie's strength. She not only wants to fight Mr. _____ but also wants to kill him. The situation changes Cilie's perspective on her limited ability. Now, she aims to live on her own. Leaving Mr. _____ provides Cilie more time to realize her inner strength and find her own talent: making clothes. The protagonist finally loves and values herself. After valuing themselves, the two protagonists step into another stage to re-define themselves against black stereotype.

1.1.2 Reaching Self-Definition

Janie's marriage life with Starks keeps her from being visible because her voice is kept under her husband's power. Starks gets all the credit of building the new town while Janie's place is at the store and kitchen. Thus, she becomes desperate. However, when she has a chance Janie talks back to Starks to show her existence and strength. Talking back becomes part of her personality throughout the story. Although, her husband does not change his way of treating her until he passes away, Janie at least, defines herself as a free woman who strongly follows her own will.

In Walker's The Color Purple, the protagonist always denies talking back or defining herself against others because she is not strong enough to do that. While Janie looks for a chance to change her life, Cilie struggles from trying to survive each day without being beaten. Talking back behavior is something Cilie does not dare to do until she cannot keep her anger any longer. At that point, she talks right back to Mr. _____. She exposes his cruelty. It is interesting that the two protagonists both publicly expose their husbands and re-define themselves.

In sum, although Janie and Cilie have different personal backgrounds, they can reach the power of self in personal level by valuing themselves better and re-defining themselves to be seen and heard in the way they really are. The protagonists, after reaching their self-liberation in personal level, are ready to broaden their success that is giving and sharing what they have to others, and this creates the power of sisterhood.

1.2 The Interlocking Nature of Oppression

The power of sisterhood rises from the interlocking nature of oppression which is a strategy that aims for knowledge and culture sharing among women. The connection among oppressed black women is believed to be the second level of

reaching self-liberation. From the previous chapters, the two protagonists clearly benefit from sisterhood tie. They do not only take the knowledge to improve their lives but also pass their experiences to others.

Although Janie, from Their Eyes Were Watching God, has a stronger personality and relies on herself most of the time, she still needs to share her life experience with other women. Janie learns to grow up from her grandmother. Then, she learns from the story of Anne Tyler who is cheated by a young lover. The last woman that Janie connected to is her best friend, Pheoby. With Pheoby, Janie is at her ripen stage. She is fully self-satisfied because she has lived through all struggles. While they talk, Janie plays a scholar role and Pheoby is like a student. The protagonist passes all her knowledge and life experience to her friend while Pheoby provides her with good friendship.

Cilie, because of her weak and exploited personality, needs more power of sisterhood to reach her self-liberation. Cilie's realization on her right clearly begins when Nettie, Shug, Sofia, and Mary Agnes show her how to do it. Nettie provides Cilie hope and power of education. Through letters, Nettie teaches Cilie about African people, society and culture.

Shug Avery is the woman who shows Cilie how to resist social discrimination wisely. A woman like Shug does not talk about education, but she talks about living for one's own happiness. Cilie is strongly influenced by Shug. Their bond reminds her of power of sisterhood that can be true.

Sofia and Mary Agnes both have relationship with Cilie as friends although they are so different. Sofia is aggressive and prefers violence to negotiation. Mary Agnes brings Cilie songs that voice themselves against any social prejudice. Although Cilie's women friends act as they are her assistants, Cilie passes some of her life

experience to them. She makes Shug and Sofia gentler and more thoughtful.

Comparing how Janie applies the interlocking nature of oppression to end their life struggles to Cilie's, it seems that sisterhood is needed more in Cilie's case. The reason is that she is weaker and cannot start her own fighting. It can be considered that in order to reach their liberation, the weaker women need stronger bonds than the stronger women.

1.3 The Importance of Afro-American Women's Culture

Besides the power of self and sisterhood, the protagonists use culture and knowledge sharing strategy to reach their liberations. Hurston and Walker as folklorist and novelist present the toughness, grace, and beauty of African American women's culture in their novels. They present images of black women, religion, oral culture, and blues.

From the previous chapters, the first obstacle that keeps the protagonists from joining knowledge and culture sharing activities is their images. The image of Janie in Their Eyes Were Watching God is a beautiful and smart black woman and the image comes with high social expectation on her. So, she cannot participate in any unladylike activities for example telling jokes, sharing ideas with men, and playing checker games. People who believe that they love her give her money, clothes, and houses but take her freedom and voices. Some women refuse to be her friends because she is too high and rich. She is alienated because of the given images from the community conventional belief.

On the contrary, Cilie's image is a poor and hopeless black woman. Although she is generous and religious, she is weak. Weak Cilie lives under the given image which suppresses her under the dominant power. Without education or any backups,

Cilie falls into the category of being an oppressed black woman.

The other obstacle that oppressed the protagonists is the power of religion. Janie faces the power of religion when she starts seeing Tea Cake. Her position as a mayor's wife is testified by her love. Janie denies the conventional belief and starts searching for the horizon which is a new hope in life.

Religion plays a major role in Cilie's life. Walker presents her novel through letters and most of them are from Cilie to God. Cilie is a religious woman until she finds out that her God is just a white old man who ignores her prayers. She stops writing to him and realizes that her new God is in everything.

In terms of black oral culture, Janie and Cilie have different social status, so their oral culture activities happen in different places, times, and with different groups of people. Janie who is a mayor's wife listens to stories at the porch of her husband's biggest store in town. The people at Eatonville share their perspectives in life on their career, town, and money. The stories are so interesting to Janie who is smart and educated, but she is not allowed to join them.

Cilie, on the contrary, shares her stories at the field she works under the hot sun with Harpo or Sofia. They talk about family issues. However, when Cilie meets Shug, her topic of talking is broadened. Shug introduces her to think about sex, god, belief, and career. In addition, when Cilie tries to do her clothing business, she talks to more people. It seems when she stops talking to the silent God, she can connect to other people who have various knowledge and cultures. She becomes smarter. Her spoken language is improved as well as her knowledge.

Janie also has her voice at the new place with the new people who are introduced to her by her new husband, Tea Cake. With the multicultural people at Everglade, Janie shares all the stories she has. Her voice is heard. After she can

communicate to other people, she becomes stronger. She uses her knowledge in court to be free. It is proved black women's knowledge is a powerful weapon that can be used to liberate themselves.

The next aspect on black women's culture is the presence of blues in the two novels. Blues emerges in African American communities of the United States from spiritual works, songs, field hollers, shouts and chants, and rhymed simple narrative ballads. Blues is more rebellious and independent when it is compared to other kinds of music. Janie tastes the bitter sweet sound of blues for the first time when she meets Tea Cake. Janie cannot resist the charming of blues.

Through Shug Avery's and Mary Agnes's songs, Walker presents blues to reveal her character's life as well. Blues in The Color Purple narrates the characters' lives. It talks mainly about gender and racial prejudice.

2. Discussion

After the long tracing on the lives of the two protagonists through this research, it is obvious that social discriminations, especially, gender prejudice, suppress black women. Moreover, black patriarchy or status causes black women's oppression. The two protagonists are good example of black women who are shaped to behave under social control. By giving the protagonists images and naming them mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters, the society robs their dreams and destroys their desire to pursue happiness. This study proves that oppression can happen to either lower or higher class women. The oppression actually starts when they were born to be called black women. Moreover, it can be passed from one generation to the next generation as it happens to Nanny and Janie or Cilie and her mother. Black women tend to teach their daughters or granddaughters to behave under the dominant power to keep peace in the

family instead of fighting or demanding for equal rights. Black women tend to sacrifice their personal desires to fulfill their family's needs. The passed oppression creates major destruction in black society as it suppresses the weaker members like black women.

In this research, Janie and Cilie are from different backgrounds, so they tend to react to their oppression differently. Janie fights oppression with her confidence, dream, and wisdom while Cilie overcomes it with her anger and friends reliance. Janie and Cilie broaden their success when they pass their experiences to other black women. Finally, they start applying their knowledge and culture to live wisely and become happy women. The research presents that by realizing their strength and showing it to the world in the way that suits their life conditions, black women will be able to free themselves from any social discriminations.

Additionally, the stories of Janie and Cilie leave a significant notion on the importance of education and knowledge and culture sharing. We can see that Janie and Cilie have different educational backgrounds as Janie is educated from school of white people while Cilie's classroom is the fields and kitchens. It is obvious that it takes Cilie more time to reach her liberation than Janie does. However, Cilie's life lesson empowers her to become stronger as well. From Cilie's case, it is obvious that the real life lesson can be so solid that it sustains her success in the long run. In sum, real education does not need to be in textbooks or classroom activities. Education can come through an individual's dairy life experience. The educational success does not always presented as a diploma or certificate but it actually is how much that person can apply the knowledge in real life situation. In addition, once a person is really educated, both formally and informally, they can possibly reach a sustainable life and become independent. Thus, liberation waits at the end of their life journey as it does

to Janie and Cilie.

The issue of gender prejudice is not only found in black community but also presented in most societies in the world. The male-reliance belief seems universal as men are always chosen to be leaders although women participate in more social institution these days. Thai society is considered to be one of the male dominated societies as Thai men control most of the leading roles. To support men to reach their successes and become family's pride, Thai women have to sacrifice their own desire. Thai women work hard to earn some money to support their families and some of them choose to enter prostitution business to gain more money.

Thai women's image is quite negative because of the growth of sex trade and prostitution business in Thailand. Some of the Thai women trade themselves to get financial support for their families and for their own needs and desires. Most of the women are from poor personal background and they are uneducated, so they look for protection from old rich foreign men. Since this study emphasizes on women's liberation, it can be applied to find solution for Thai women's problems. From this analysis, education can be considered as an important tool that can liberate black women, so Thai government should provide better education and career support for the women to empower them to live better lives. Then, the educated women should be able to break the stereotypical images of being prostitutes and create positive images of Thai women.

I would like to end my discussion with a notice on the two novels which I personally find it interesting and significant. As the two novels have happy endings, the writers tend to provide us with a desire to reach our real happiness. The two protagonists are created to be seen as heroines who do not have too smart brains or incredibly beautiful appearances. Both have unique flaws like the rest of us. However,

as ordinary people, they finally discover themselves and live more meaningful lives with their families and friends happily. The happy ending stories may seem utopian but at the same time the hidden message from the writers can be the hope that will be in the readers' hearts. In the world that is full of problems, obstacles, and battles, the only light at the end of the dark tunnel is hope. It is the simple hope that we all are chasing for. We all hope to be free and liberated so we can choose our own ways of life and live happily as Cilie and Janie.

3. Recommendation for Further Studies

In order to broaden studies on women's liberation, the following topics are recommended:

3.1 There should be research on blues tradition that affects African American women's life in other stories because blues culture plays major role in African American society.

3.2 Education as a factor that assists black women to reach their liberation should be studied to emphasize power of education against social discriminations.

3.3 There should be further studies on the effects of family violence on women's life in other stories because personal biography influences people's lives.

3.4 There should be a study on black women's liberation in institutional level to understand the possibility of women reaching higher social positions.

3.5 Black oral cultures in other stories should be studied since it is an important tool to free black women

3.6 As prostitution and women's rights problems gives negative reputation on Thai people, there should be a study on how to assist Thai women to realize their valuation and liberation.

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