

**ESCAPING PRISONS THROUGH LITERARY EXPRESSION: A  
FEMINIST STUDY OF ADICHI AND WALKER'S SELECTED  
NOVELS**

by

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Masha Lethabo [REDACTED] declare that the research study entitled: **Escaping prisons through literary expression: a feminist study of Adichie and Walker's selected novels is my own work.** All the information that has been used that is not my own have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that this work has not been submitted to any other institution, organisation or publisher.

Signature

Date

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the strong women in my life, my mother, Elizabeth Masha, my younger sister, Reconcile Masha and my grandmother, Miriam Masha. Their support and advices have kept me going throughout the journey of my studies.

This work is also dedicated to all the voiceless women around me.

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Most importantly, I thank my heavenly guardian, God. Once again He has completed the good work that He has started in my studies. Knowing that He only has plans to prosper us and not to harm us has been the driving force for me whenever I felt weak.

2 Timothy 4:7\_I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

I Would also like express my gratitude to the following people for their support and encouragement:

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## **ABSTRACT**

Gender role expectations are mostly influenced and perpetuated by patriarchy whereby women are marginalised by their surroundings while men are granted the will to do as they wish. The institution of patriarchy thrives on oppressing women in many ways and silencing them is one of those various ways. This study was prompted by the need to explore the experiences that surround African women and that of women in the African diaspora with regard to muted voices of marginalised females. Their inability to express themselves in the name of respecting culture and conforming to the expected behaviour as per their gender is majorly explored. The current study is a literary analysis of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2005) which is narrated by fourteen-year-old Kambili. In it, Adichie explores patriarchy through the family of a strict catholic man by the name of Eugene Achike who stifles his family due to his strict supposed laws of God. Also, *The Colour Purple* (1982) by Alice Walker is analysed. In this epistolary novel, Walker documents the story of two sisters, Nettie and Celie, who become estranged as a result of their muffled conditions. While the contexts for the novels are distinctly different in many ways, they share oppressive ideologies towards women, which is the colonial experience in Africa.

The aims and objectives of this study were met by using the Feminism, African feminism, Womanism theories and the concept of intersectionality as references. The findings indicate that sisterhood relationships and economic independence are huge emancipators for marginalised women.

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, Marginalisation, Feminism, Womanism, subjugation, othering

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 Background and motivation

Societies all over the world have certain ways in which they behave around and towards each other, and these behaviours are mostly influenced by culture, tradition and/or any other forms of set or accustomed ways of living. In quite a number of communities such as some rural parts of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, most parts of Saudi Arabia and Africa there are certain gender role expectations. These gender role expectations are mostly influenced and perpetuated by patriarchy whereby women are marginalised by their surroundings while men are granted the will to do as they wish. The institution of patriarchy thrives on oppressing women in many ways and silencing them is one of those various ways. Ifechelobi (2014:18) confirms that, “in order for men to assert their power over women, the women must be silent”. Being silent does not allow the victim to have a voice or an opinion but rather to do as they are dictated to all the time.

Literature is a mirror of the world’s realities. Authors write intending to bring to light what might be unknown, thereby changing the *status quo*. Literature has afforded authors to write about some of the cruel victimisations that suppressed people go through, some to bring to light what might be unknown to others while some write in order to also change the *status quo*. Both African male and female authors have their own ways of writing about the experiences of the black woman. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is an author and activist famously known for, *We Should All Be Feminists* (2014), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *Americanah* (2014) in her list of works. This study seeks to analyse *Purple Hibiscus* (2005), which is one of her literary works. In it, Adichie explores patriarchy through the family of a strict catholic man by the name of Eugene Achike. His religious stance compels him to instil fear in order to gain forced respect from those around him, especially his family, with the exception of his father and sister who are very assertive. The novel is narrated by fifteen-year-old Kambili who while visiting her aunt Ifeoma, realises that there is a different world of freedom and possibilities outside the one that she is raised up in.

Alice Walker is an African American author and most popular for her book, *In Search of our Mother’s Gardens* (2004) and *The Colour Purple* (1982). The latter was selected

as an analysis text for this research study. Walker documents the story of two sisters, Nettie and Celie, who become estranged as a result of their stifled conditions. After Nettie refuses to marry a man by the name of Albert who is referred to as Mr \_\_\_\_\_ in most parts of the novel by her sister, Celie is taken as the wife at a young age and is alienated from her biological children, Olivia and Adam, whom she reconciles with towards the end of the novel.

This study was prompted by the need to explore the experiences that surround African women and that of women in the African diaspora with regard to muted voices of marginalised females. Their inability to express themselves in the name of respecting culture and conforming to the expected behaviour as per their gender is majorly explored. Furthermore, the effects that are brought about by the bottled silence and the incapability to speak their own minds are interrogated. The need to interrogate the way in which various women behave in different contexts is also a driving force for this specific study. Silence, in this study, means that either the opinions that women in the chosen literary texts raise are not taken into consideration or that the women are not given the platform to voice out their opinions which then leads to them having their opinions imprisoned.

Prisons, in this research study, mean any form of deprivation of expressing women's voices which leads to no sense of freedom, this concept of silence will also encompass characters in *The Colour Purple* and *Purple Hibiscus* who are not entirely quiet but their opinions are being influenced and therefore not their own. These forms of prisons will be either ideological or physical through physical abuse and other ways.

## **1.2 Research problem**

Gender inequality in the world occurs when women are viewed as legal minors and therefore, unable to make decisions about their own lives and those around them, instead, the men in their lives do that on their behalf. In Africa and the Diaspora, which is the focal point of the study, the absence of gender equality has been one of the problems faced with and this problem has persisted into the Post - Colonial era even after African countries gained democracy. Independence from the coloniser gave the delusion that there shall be equal rights for all people across the barriers of racism and sexism. Women in many African countries have been subjected to economic, social

and political inequalities for most of their existence. Some of these oppressions are due to the fact that women are not given the opportunities to voice out their opinions and feelings concerning the events that take place in their lives and around them, most importantly to even make decisions concerning their own lives.

While the contexts for the novels are distinctly different in many ways, they share oppressive ideologies towards women, which is the colonial experience in Africa. The colonial experiences of ‘othering’ have had a negative effect on the black society. DeGruy (2017:5) observes that black people are left to manifest the trauma which was caused by the master-slave relationship within the slaveholding community of the south, even post emancipation. “When the master-slave relationship was no longer present, it remained a model for interpersonal relationships between black people” (DeGruy 2017). Such experiences have moved from race subjugation to gender subjugation.

A majority of women find themselves trapped in their marriages as wives and mothers and in their families as daughters and sisters, as a result of the dictated cultural norms that women should not be expressive. This research aims to debunk the gender stereotypes which have led to the researcher’s need to explore the causes and effects of silencing women in the selected novels of Adichie and Walker.

### **1.3 Literature review**

According to Fink (2005:3), research literature review is a systematic, clear and reproducible method for identifying, synthesising and evaluating the present body of completed and documented work which is produced by researchers or scholars in a particular field. Works by prominent authors and scholars such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1988), Goredema (2010) and others will be critically examined and will be used as a tool to dismantle the issues that make up the research study by looking into each and every aspect and at the end reach a conclusion.

*The Colour Purple* (1982) is an epistolary novel set in Georgia about two sisters, Celie and Nettie that were separated by their abusive circumstances during the 1930s. This novel has been recreated into both a film and a musical. The narrator Celie who is fourteen years old writes letters to God because her father Alphonso who is referred

to as Pa throughout the novel, beats and sexually abuses her constantly, to a point where she is impregnated by her father and has a son named Adam who is taken away from her by her father. Brownmiller (1975:28) explains that “when men discovered that they could rape, they proceeded to do it...Man’s discovery that his genitalia could function as a weapon to cause fear must rank as one of the most important discoveries of prehistoric times.... Brownmiller (1975) further concludes that “men use rape to impose their power over women, it is nothing more and nothing less than a conscious process by which all men keep all women in a state of fear.” Celie’s rape events lead to Pa impregnating her and having another child, a daughter who she names Olivia and is also taken away from her.

A man known as Mr\_\_\_\_\_ is in need of someone to look after him and his children and therefore, intends to marry Nettie who is twelve years old but their Pa refuses and offers Celie instead. Since Mr\_\_\_\_\_ desperately needs a helper, he agrees to settle for Celie. Later, Nettie escapes from Pa and seeks refuge at Celie’s new home where Mr\_\_\_\_\_ tries to pursue Nettie sexually and when she refuses she is forcefully removed from her sister’s place. Mr\_\_\_\_\_’s son, Harpo, gets married to a girl named Sofia who surprises Celie by her boldness towards her husband and refuses to submit to Harpo’s controlling tactics to control her.

Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* (2005) is a novel usually referred to as a ‘coming of age novel’ whereby the main character grows psychologically and morally from childhood to adulthood. This novel is set in a post-colonial Nigeria when the country was shadowed by economic and political instabilities. The narrator is a young girl by the name, Kambili, who talks about her family’s circumstances and her road to maturity. The rising action of the novel is when Kambili and her brother Jaja visit their aunt Ifeoma. There, Kambili and her brother are exposed to a different way of Catholic living from that of their own house where there are many restrictions especially of expressing one’s own ideas and thoughts. “We always spoke with a purpose back home, especially at the table, but my cousins seemed to simply speak and speak” Adichie (2005:120). Their aunt, Ifeoma, is an example of a more liberated and assertive woman who most often disagrees with her brother Eugene about how he leads his family.

### 1.3.1 Feminism

Feminism is the advocacy for women based on gender equality and equal opportunities for all genders. As an activist movement, feminism has been given different misleading explanations of what it is really about, but one eminent myth is that the movement is anti-men and all about castrating and stripping men off their maleness. The Feminist movement, which has proved to be powerful through the years, began to gain real acceptance in Africa in the 1970s partly because women have always been viewed as sexual or submissive objects to serve their male counterparts either sexually or in other manners.

Feminism has, since its invention, developed different strands such as radical, liberal and others. Also, as a result of different experiences, new terms have been coined as other activists or scholars of the movement such as Alice Walker did not want to be associated with the term ‘feminism’. Goredema (2010:34) explains that African feminism is a feminist epistemology which has provided arguments validating the experiences of women in Africa and of the African origin. Goredema (2010) further remarks that it also concerns itself with those women living in the Diaspora as many of them contribute to the African literature. African feminism and Womanism will be used as a reference point for this research study because the primary texts chosen are of African and the Diaspora origin.

Gender injustices that are inflicted on women are usually felt first hand by them but they are unable to confront them in any way, be it to report them to a superior subject or to confront them personally. This is usually because when women decide to speak up against such injustices, they become victims of being non-conformists. The feminist movement aims to change the mind-set of gender stereotypes and myths that patriarchal societies have implanted into people, such as the embodiment of being ‘a strong black woman’. Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2005:02) postulates that this construction of strength forces women to endure a life of struggle without complaining and needing assistance. This construction of strength allows both the onlooker and the woman to de-emphasise her struggle, to turn a blind eye to the real oppression and to disconnect from any assistance.

Smiley (2015) asks important questions which include how silence could be detrimental to the physical and mental states of suppressed groups of women.

Research has shown that most women who are victims of any kind of gender injustices keep to themselves and when they finally get the opportunity to flee, they either disappear for a while in order to escape those around them who inflict the oppression or experience serious nervous breakdowns. Feminism seeks to afford women the spaces to express how they feel and to behave according to how they feel without being judged, and these are some of the issues that Virginia Woolf addresses in *A Room of One's Own* (1945).

### 1.3.2 Patriarchy as a source of imprisonment

Patriarchy is an institution that distributes power unequally between men and women to the disadvantage of women. Bhasin (1993:13) defines patriarchy as “a system in which women experience discrimination, violence, relegation, abuse and oppression by men. Othering exists in many ways and in different contexts, whereby the ‘self’ suppresses the ‘other’ and gender othering occurs when women are deprived of certain opportunities that men are privileged to enjoy because of their gender. The system of patriarchy functions in a way that men, with the help of the society, are seen as more superior to women to an extent where the idea is instilled in the minds of the community.

Patriarchy is an institution that normalises gender inequality through a set of rules that it presents, the injustices that women endure are made to seem normal as if they are a way of life. Walker-Barnes (2014:01) says that the one myth that she has had to endure her entire life is that strength is her birth right, therefore, such myths imprison the mental states of women by making them believe all these set myths. The system of patriarchy enforces different tools in order for it to function, one of those is silencing the victim. In such patriarchal communities, according to Smiley (2015), the black woman is a subject-less subject, one who bears witness to the disaster but is unable to speak. The experiences of the women in *The Colour Purple* and *Purple Hibiscus* are proof of such patriarchal societies, hence the aspiration to examine these two novels.

### 1.3.3 Religion as a source of imprisonment

Before the coloniser invaded Africa, the continent had its own belief systems in which Africans worshipped different kinds of supreme beings, most of which were mostly their ancestors. Religion can be explained as the belief in higher being for protection

and everything that people can possibly wish for. The colonial system introduced missionaries who introduced Christianity, mainly Catholicism and they also introduced schools where native black children were formally educated. Western and African societies are different in the ways in which they relate and act. Religion is seen as one of the factors that encourage gender inequality because women are expected to be dormant and inactive participants in the church and this expectation extends to the homes of Christian families. Religion has been organised as working to interpret scripture through the lens of patriarchy and legitimising patriarchy by making it seem to be endorsed by God.

Eugene, from *Purple Hibiscus*, is influenced by his religion in the way that he behaves and treats those that are around him, he does not see anything as done properly unless it is done in a way that the white man does it. "He did things the right way, the way the white people did, not what our people do now" (Adichie 2005:68). He is further alienated from his father because he is not Catholic and Eugene therefore regards him as a heathen, this also leads to his children not having a relationship with their grandfather.

The Synod of Bishops (Paulo II,1994) acknowledged that women in Africa are the backbone of church and society; but in a patriarchal church and society, women are marginalised in both indirect and explicit ways. John II notes in *Christifideles laici* (1994: para 51) that:

"Without discrimination, women should be participants in the life of the church and also in consultation and the decision-making process. Also, that women ought to be recognised as co-workers in the mission of the church in the family, in professional life and in civil communities".

Eugene's sister, Ifeoma, is also Catholic but is different in the way in which she views the world, this is seen in the way in which she treats her family and the ambitions that she has about herself. Eugene's wife and daughter are constantly oppressed by Eugene in the name of Catholicism which leads to them not being free and unable to make decisions for themselves.

#### 1.3.4 The role of education in patriarchy

It is generally believed that when you educate a woman you educate the whole nation. According to Benn (2005), women are the heart of our societies, which means that in giving women education a country makes a worthwhile investment for a better future for the whole country.

The Department for International Development (2005) notes that women with at least a basic education are much less likely to be poor, it is said that basic education can refer to the ability to read and write, including doing basic mathematics. Women are always finding ways to fend for their families with the little money that they have.

In *The Colour Purple*, Nettie most benefits from education, while Celie's schooling is shortened because of her unwanted pregnancies and her early marriage to Mr \_\_\_\_\_. As a result, Nettie gains skills that enable her to become a missionary teacher, while Celie is bound to an abusive domestic subjection that gives her little chance to develop intellectually.

In Letter 4 Celie tells Nettie to keep learning her 'books' so that she can escape, through factual knowledge, from the 'lies' that Celie believes killed their mother. Education is one of the many means of escape from a world that is dominated by men. When Nettie begins to write regularly to Celie, she not only educates her sister by sending detailed written accounts of Africa and its people, but also broadens Celie's horizons, and those of the novel's reading audience.

#### **1.4 Role of theory in the study**

According to Sunday (2016:3), theory is a model or framework for observation and understanding, which shapes both what we see and how we see it. Also, it allows the researcher to make links between the abstract and the concrete. Literature, just like other fields of study requires a set of rules which are used to analyse it with, literary theories are used to judge the literariness of a text and to extract understanding based on the certain literary text. Mogoboya (2011:29) additionally explains that a literary theory clarifies the relationship between the text and reality. This research study employs two approaches which are, the womanist combined with intersectionality and the African feminist theory because they complement each other and the researcher believes that the approaches do justice to the significance of the study.

#### 1.4.1 African feminism

Feminist movement emerged during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and further turned into a theory in order to understand and analyse the nature of gender inequality for research purposes. Women from all parts of the world have different life experiences, be it from their past or present leading to the future. Previously disadvantaged women such as those from Asia and Africa and their descendants most often share the same experiences. Black communities of the Diaspora that have been displaced due to colonial practices such as slave trade share the same experiences as black communities that are still in Africa. Goredema (2010:34) highlights that “African feminism concerns itself not only with the rights of women from Africa but it also includes the rights of those living in the Diaspora as many of the contributors to the literature have often lived “abroad”. This is the reason why this study will include the work of Alice Walker despite her geographical location. African Feminism Theory is developed from the works of scholars such as Aidoo, 1998; Mohanty, 1988 and Weir, 2007.

The RoSa-Factsheets (2004) points out that, unlike Western Feminism, African Feminism concerns itself with culture rather than the woman’s autonomy. A major factor in the patriarchal state of Africans lies in the Private-Public Divide whereby women are traditionally associated with the private spheres such as the home and children when men are concerned with the public life and social roles. African feminism lays its foundation primarily on the concept of the importance of the community over the individual and women’s reproductive role.

#### 1.4.2 Womanism and Intersectionality

The term ‘womanism’ was coined by the renowned African American author Alice Walker who is also the author of one of the selected texts of this research study. Walker (1983) defines a womanist as (a) a black feminist or feminist of colour, (b) who loves other women sexually and/or nonsexual, (c) Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility and women's strength and (d), one who is committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female. Izgarjan and Markov (2012) maintain that “at the centre of womanism is the concern for women and their role in their immediate surroundings (be it family, local community or work place) and more global environment”.

Intersectionality is a term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989. According to Crenshaw (1989), the main objective of intersectionality is to point out that mainstream feminism does not echo on the experiences of all the multi-layered aspects in life that women of all backgrounds face. This is because mainstream feminism is too white and middle-class. Crenshaw further argues that black women are discriminated in ways that often do not fit neatly within the legal categories of either racism or sexism, but as a combination of both.

## **1.5 Purpose of the study**

### **1.5.1 Aim**

To explore and name patriarchal underpinnings in Walker's *Purple Hibiscus* and Adichie's *The Colour Purple* by using feminist theories to make explicit the function of patriarchy in enforcing silence.

### **1.5.2 Research Questions**

- How does patriarchy imprison Beatrice Achike and Kambili Achike (*Purple Hibiscus*) and Celie (*The Colour Purple*) in terms of self-expression?
- What are the effects of Beatrice and Kambili (*Purple Hibiscus*) and Celie (*The Colour Purple*) being deprived a voice of their own?
- How can black women escape the confines set by their cultural norms?

## **1.6 Research methodology**

Research methodology is a systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study, which indicates a detailed account of the overall research approach, including the research design, population and sampling, data collection instruments and data analysis. This includes the required statistical tools which will be used to address the research.

### **1.6.1 Research Method and Design**

The research paradigm in which this research is located is the qualitative methodology. This paradigm is seen as suitable because this research will be an analysis of literary

texts and not an investigation which will be determined by external factors such as questionnaires or interviews. The core research approach adopted for this study is content analysis. Leedy and Ormrod (2005:142) in their book, *Practical Research*, explain content analysis as a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a specific body of a work for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes and biases. The primary texts which are *Purple Hibiscus* and *The Colour Purple* will be considered as the source of information and ones which the research draws a conclusion from.

#### 1.6.2 Data collection

This study is a textual analysis of novels as primary sources. Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Walker's *The Colour Purple* were chosen due to their relevance to the research topic. Critical texts such as Mohanty's *Under Western Eyes* (1988) are examined as secondary sources.

#### 1.6.3 Data analysis

The primary sources are investigated and the ideas arising have been synthesised to endeavour to find solutions to the research questions. This study also uses theoretical lens to analyse the chosen texts.

#### 1.6.4 Quality Criteria

This study follows current trends and debates in the field from journals, articles and established scholars of the field such as Mohanty, Aidoo and others. It goes on to use the epistemology and concepts of the field. Furthermore, it is scholarly systematic so as to comply with the acceptable principles of research and is as objective as possible in order to reach an honest and unbiased conclusion.

This research study was finally presented at departmental, school and faculty levels. Finally, the researcher's gender did not in any way let her personal viewpoint hinder a reliable and credible conclusion.

### 1.7 Significance of the study

This research is not aimed at changing the existing nature of issues in the gender studies. The intention is to add new information to the field using the in-depth analysis of the issues presented and portrayed in the selected novels of Adichie and Walker.

The researcher can only hope that this study becomes relevant both practically and theoretically to the field of gender studies, in such a way that the contributions brought forward by this study and the findings are of great impact to the field and the literary sphere.

This research further goes on to emancipate women and encourage them to have a voice of their own in order to avoid being trapped in their own life situations by their husbands, fathers, sons and other men.

### **1.8 Ethical considerations**

This research study was taken through to the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) in order to be cleared as a research study. This was done even though the study does not use human or animal objects but instead uses literary texts.

### **1.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced the study and how it was broken down in its analysis by outlining its purpose, how the aims and objectives were met and also the relevant framework that was implemented in order to explore the research topic by using the texts, *The Colour Purple* and *Purple Hibiscus*.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Patriarchy implements different tools to help it function and gain momentum. The major tool discussed in this research study is that of silence which is explored through the literary works of black marginalised women in Africa (*Purple Hibiscus*) and America (*The Colour Purple*). Chapter one of this research study has introduced the problem statement, outlined the aims and objectives of this research and also mentioned the framework or theory that will be adopted by this research. This current chapter discusses and reviews available literature in the gender literary field in an attempt to understand the concept of silence as used by patriarchy, including the ways in which women are enclosed and disclosed from kinds of patriarchal chains.

### **2.2 Feminism**

Feminism is the advocacy for equality of genders socially, economically and culturally. Even though women worldwide experience some form of common discrimination and marginalisation due to their gender, it cannot be assumed that they are homogenously faced with the same struggles. There are a few strands of feminism such as radical, liberal, Marxist and socialist, which seek to challenge different oppressive systems that women face on a daily basis. Historical and geographical factors also play a huge role in the experiences and needs of various groups of women. According to Mohanty (1988:337), what binds women as a unit is a sociological opinion of the similarity of their oppression, but it is also important to analyse historical backgrounds which are not biological before finding a remedial paradigm for the victims.

Suffering is not necessarily a fixed and universal experience that can be measured by a single rod; it is related to situations, needs, and aspirations. But there must be some historical and political priorities considerations for the use of the term so that political urgencies can be established and different forms and degrees of suffering can be given the most attention (Barber 1975).

Women from first world countries differ greatly with those of third world countries. A majority of first world women have never fought against discrimination based on their race as compared to previously colonised groups of women, hence, third world women

fight against a dual suppression that arises from both their race and gender. Historically, women of colour have experienced marginalisation due to their race together with their men, while simultaneously being the 'other' of men. According to Hooks (2000:03), white women who dominate the feminist discourse today rarely question whether or not their perspective on women's reality is true to the lived experiences of women as a collective group. This is due to the fact that, white women have certain racial privileges as compared to black women, the only subjugation that white women suffer from is that of gender. It is hard for white women to advocate for a cause which they have not lived to experience, also to fully accommodate groups of people with a different need other than the main mandate of a movement. With this idea, marginalised groups of women decided to form movements that better communicate with their experiences as women of colour.

#### 2.2.1 African feminism

Scholars such as Ama Ata Aidoo and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, saw the need to come up with a movement that will best relate to the experiences of the African woman. Chisale (2017:04) explains that African feminism highlights the fact that the experiences of African women and their culture differ from those of Western feminism. White women suffer only sexist oppression while black women and other women of colour from previously colonised countries suffer sexist and racial oppression, thus one remedy cannot be used as a cure for these two different groups of women. Mainstream feminism is usually associated with a hate for men, while the African society strongly believes in familial structures, where both mother and father usually provide a healthy environment for their children and other members of their families. Nnaemeka (2004) points out that African women and men are not opponents but they complement each other for the survival and development of their society. This is supported by Mekgwe (2008:16) who states that the success of African feminism as a human restructuring, cannot accept separation from the opposite sex. Therefore, unlike mainstream feminism, black women sought to form a movement that advocates for gender equality without creating enemies with their men.

Scholars such as Buchi Emecheta and Ogunyemi, prefer to be called African women because they do not want to be associated with some of the strong and radical ideas of feminism. Aidoo shares similar sentiments with other critics of feminism who argue

that feminism is one of the Western propagandas used by Westerners to bring separation and conflict between African communities. Some might argue that such allegations just prove how much black people are enslaved to their own regressive mentalities and have no desire to improve their livelihood, while women who agree with such comments are rooted participants of patriarchy.

Feminism. You know how we feel about that embarrassing western philosophy? The destroyer of homes. Imported mainly from America to ruin nice African women (Aidoo 1986).

Emecheta and Ogunyemi are amongst scholars who strongly believe that the history of different women should give basis to what kind of gender movement they are involved in. Importantly though, these scholars do not put down the other activist movements, they appreciate the differences that exist in the feminist movement. Emecheta (1982) believes that African women need to lay a certain foundation which bridges the gap between them and the white women, then only can all these women function under one kind of advocacy to re-organise the gender constructions universally.

I did not start as a feminist. I do not think I am one now. Most of my readers would take this to be the statement of a coward. But it is not. I thought before that I would like to be one but after my recent visit to the United States, when I talked to real 'Feminists' with a capital 'F', I think we women of African background still have a very very long way to go before we can really rub shoulders with such women... So my sisters in America, I am not shunning your advanced help, in fact I still think women of Africa need your contribution, and at the same time we need our men (Emecheta 1982:116).

I do believe in the African type of feminism. They call it womanism, because, you see, you Europeans don't worry about water, you don't worry about schooling, you are so well off. Now, I buy land, and I say, 'Okay, I can't build on it, I have no money, so I give it to some women to start planting.' That is my brand of feminism (Emecheta 1982:07).

The above scholars and many others feel that being allied with the term feminism would be selling out their culture and men because it seems that, that particular kind of movement discourages negotiation and forming of familial structures. This position may give assurance to their black communities that they are not anti-men and believe that both genders can reach a point of agreement. Some African women maintain that by accepting feminism, one faces the danger of 'parroting' as opposed to speaking out

creatively (Kolawole 1997:09). By coming up with the concept of African feminism, African scholars did not want to live by other people's philosophies but wanted to create one that best speaks to them and their historical and present experiences. Moreover, the issue of race in feminism is a separating factor for women. Hooks (2000:24) contends that women from previously oppressed ethnic groups do not associate with the term 'feminism' because they do not want to be perceived as supporting a racist movement; feminism is often associated with white women's rights efforts. Because black men were oppressed by systems of racism, their black women feel that they do not need more convictions of any kind, even if it means at the expense of their livelihood. Many black women choose to compromise their wellbeing for the safety of their men, this could be because of the way in which family structures are viewed in black communities. The importance and values put upon family structures are therefore used to hold oppressed women hostage by making them believe that nothing is worth separating or breaking down families, no matter the cost. In a talk, Shahrazad Ali said "now we have the equality we wanted and our men are busted and so are we". Ali seems to believe that advocating for gender equality not only exposes men of their actions but also destroys the society, hence some women would rather have a united community at the expense of their debasement as women.

## 2.2.2 Womanism and Intersectionality

Walker (2004) defines a womanist as a black feminist or feminist of colour; who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexual; appreciates and prefers women's culture and is committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Womanist is to a feminist as purple is to lavender. Floyd-Thomas (2006:01) states that womanism is a revolution and paradigm shift wherein black women no longer look to others for their liberation, but instead look to themselves. Looking to themselves means that previously colonised groups of women come up with their own movements to address their experiences, since they experience them first hand and then only can they establish relevant measures to address their issues. African critics of feminism argue that mainstream feminism is a movement for and by first world countries women and the movement can therefore not communicate the needs of the third world woman. Moreover, Hooks (2000:14) adds that white women expected black women to provide first-hand accounts of black experience, they felt it was their role to decide if their

experiences were authentic or not. White women recruited women of all races to grow numbers in the feminist movement even though only the white women's issues were the ones really addressed, hence the invention of the womanist movement as a way to stop adding numbers to a movement which was not beneficial to them.

Intersectionality is a term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw about twenty-three years ago. Intersectionality can be defined as the interaction of multiple identities and experiences of exclusion and subordination (Davis 2008:67). This concept is mostly associated with womanism as it is usually used in the context of the United States of America feminism. Together with womanism, intersectionality has been used to analyse Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* because the characters in the novel experience oppression on different scales; race, sexism and classism. Davis (2008:71) further argues that intersectionality has been concerned with the marginalisation of poor women and women of colour within white, western feminist theory. This is because intersectionality seeks to address the parts of feminism that are seen as ignored in mainstream feminism, whereas those particular parts distinguish the different kinds of women and makes the movement of activism for gender equality relevant to each individual group.

### **2.3 Patriarchy and culture**

The word 'patriarchy' is derived from Greek whereby *patria* means 'father' and *arche* means 'ruler' thus the meaning, rule of the father or the father's rule. According to Chisale (2017:15), "patriarchy is an invisible source of power that is used by society to justify the authority of men over women and property", and it operates in different ways. Similarly, Asiyambola (2005:03) defines patriarchy as "a system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions". Oppression is mostly associated with the distribution of power whereby the superior individual has more power than the inferior individual and uses certain dynamics to practise such powerful acts. In the case of patriarchy, men use authority to exercise their power over women. According to Sultana (2011:01), the major objective of patriarchy is to obstruct women's advancement and development by ensuring that women can never be good enough to be independent but always rely on their men for almost everything. Patriarchy can manifest itself and its effects privately

or publicly. Private patriarchy is often experienced in the home behind closed doors. This kind of patriarchy is usually enforced in the home, by husbands, fathers or any other male figure in the family. Public patriarchy is enforced most often in institutions outside the home. This could be in the workplace, institutions of learning and public platforms. Usually, public patriarchy is a façade as it convinces the onlooker to think that there is no patriarchy while it also consists of ‘outsiders within’.

Private patriarchy is when men such as husbands and fathers directly benefit from the oppression and subordination of women. Public patriarchy is based on the public structures other than domestic and family space; it gives women access to both the private and public sphere but their access to both is mediocre and collectively subordinated by societal constructions (Walby 1990:178).

Patriarchy becomes part of people’s lives when it is seen as a normal day-to-day practice. According to Hooks (2010), as people grow up, one of the systems that all people learn the most is that of patriarchy. This is because patriarchal gender roles are given to people from a young age and from there we are given constant guidance about the ways in which we can best fulfil these roles. Patriarchy has certain gender expectations which are to be adhered to in order to maintain the social hierarchy, these include the ideologies that females are associated with weakness, submission, passivity and other characteristics that maintain women dependence on men. On the other hand, men are associated with characteristics such as strength, leadership and others that impose superiority. These are the social constructions of the concepts of masculinity and femininity. Hooks (2010) further explains that during her childhood, it was clear that behaviour had to follow a predetermined, gendered script that had already determined what people ought to be and the identities they should choose based on patriarchal values and belief about gender. In order to maintain these gender roles as defined by society, Aina (1998:06) says that, various taboos ensure conformity with these clearly defined sex roles. Women who refuse to remain under the patriarchal rule end up suffering the consequences of being non-conformists.

### 2.3.1 Violence

Violence can be defined as the act of using destructive force with the intention to hurt, kill or harm. Patriarchal males use various tools to help carry out the sole purpose of superiority. One way of instilling stern leadership over women for men is through violence. Households that consist of patriarchal men and women did not just emerge out of nowhere but are the results of the socialisation that has been engraved from their childhood. Some include being raised by patriarchal parents, boys that grow up in households where their fathers abused their mothers are most likely to also be abusive towards the women in their lives, because for them wife-battering has always been a way of life.

Cousins (2001:01) avers that the dilemma for women in many African communities is that, forms of violence such as wife-battering are hidden and kept secret and mostly that society normalises them. Traditional men encourage young husbands that the only way for a man to instil respect in a woman is by beating the respect out of her, while older women console battered women by saying that when a man beats you up it means he loves you. In addition, Shangase (2000:23) explains that African culture expects women, wives and women in general, to love the very people who abuse them almost every day and see their harmful acts as acts of love.

### 2.3.2 Marriage, headship and submission

The institution of marriage follows set rules such as the hierarchy of the family. Some cultures and religions recognise a man as the head of the family and therefore the leader. In religious contexts, the wife is seen as the helper of the man but most often the views of the wife are never taken into consideration. According to the Christian religion, it is not good for a man to be alone, hence Eve was taken from Adam's rib and therefore became his wife. This is one biblical verse that is popularly read when people get married. The Bible also goes on to highlight ways in which husbands and wives should live together in accordance to their expected gender roles. The wife is commanded to submit while the husband is commanded to love. Patriarchs originate from the Bible hence Chisale (2017:16) supports this view by saying that in a patriarchal society, since a husband is the head of the household, the wife should submit to him. The interpretation of these roles contributes to some of the reasons why some feminists hate marriage as it seems there is an unequal consideration of the two individual involved. This is a result of the use of biblical texts to support the

respect and appreciation of the ideology of wifehood (Shangase 2000). Some feminists argue that in marriage, the wife and husband should be viewed and treat each other as equals, no one should feel superior than the other.

According to Shangase (2000:17), in the African traditional culture, the construction of wifehood is that a good wife respects and loves her husband through thick and thin. ‘Thin’ sometimes refers to days when there is abuse in the household and ‘thick’ would refer to the days when there is happiness. Most African societies, especially older women who initiate younger brides, stress the fact that a good wife does not air her household’s dirty linen in public. Whether one’s husband cheats or is abusive in any way, a good wife should endure in silence in order to not bring shame to her husband or family, hence an African bride is instructed to never go back to her maiden home after marriage.

Dowry, which is famously known in South Africa as *lobola*, perpetuates men’s belief that if they pay dowry, then they have every right to treat women as their property. Dowry is the exchange of goods for a wife. This transaction is usually in the form of money or material objects; the significance of dowry differs from one community to the other. Some communities make a huge deal about the amount of money paid while some just care about the value of the exchange even when the money is not so much. In some parts of Africa, young girls are taken out of school and married off at a young age in order for their families to get money in exchange, hence it is usually said that if a man has a lot of daughters, he is surely rich. Brides who want out of marriages are discouraged also by the fact that their families would have to pay back the dowry to the husband’s family and often times, when that time comes, the money would have been used already.

## **2.4 Religion**

Religion is the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods. This study therefore focuses on the Christian religion which is mainly based on the Holy Bible. According to Corneliusen (2012:08), one of the most effective weapons used by the patriarchy to gain control over women has always been through silencing them and some traditional Christian churches thrive in silencing

women by using the Word of God. The interpretation of scriptures varies from preachers and congregants, usually depending on what benefits them. There are quite a few scriptures from the Bible that speak about the silencing of women such as:

1 Corinthians 14:32

Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says.

The above scripture highlights the fact that women should not utter a word in the church and silence is associated with submission in the Bible, hence a vocal woman is usually said to be disobedient and not submissive.

Ephesians 5:22-24:

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

This scripture is also interpreted by others that women cannot be leaders or preachers in church. This deprivation of women speakers is furthermore extended to the households hence women are not recognised as leaders in the house.

1 Timothy 2:12

I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man; she is to remain quiet.

Authority can be defined as the power or right to give orders, make decisions and impose obedience. In certain churches, this scripture reinforces the marginalisation of Christian women both in the church and unfortunately this further extends to the households. According to Kambarami (2006:05), Eve's creation from Adam's rib has made women occupy a subordinate position in the church as well as in the family.

Genesis 2:20-22:

So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam[a] no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs[b] and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib[c] he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

Women are therefore, viewed merely as second-class citizens who were created as an afterthought of the main creation. Therefore, male supremacy is accepted as a ‘biblical norm’ and can therefore not be questioned. Some religious restrictions for women include durations of natural occurrences such as menstruation and pregnancy in which they are not supposed to enter their temples or congregate.

Inter-Press Service (2002:06) explains that culture and religion, as powerful institutions within society, contribute immensely in shaping gender roles and perpetuating gender inequality. One of the reasons for this phenomenon is the traditional belief that women are born to be subordinates of men who are born to dominate.

The Inter-Press Service (2002:17) further states that for many women around the world, religion is a source of identity, belonging and comfort in times of hardship but also, it is often a force which causes them to accept violence and oppression as part of life. This also discourages positive social change.

#### 2.4.2 Silence

Silence is the act of not uttering words and not talking to the next person, in this study the meaning of silence is stretched to also mean the act of not voicing out one’s genuine thoughts or views by masking their truth with what is expected from the victims of silence. According to Jack (1999), women use different forms of silence to mask control or anger and at times to hurt others. The different kinds of silence include hostile silence, controlling silence, resisting silence, political silence and safe silence. Hostile silence is observed as a façade that masks aggression, this form of silence plays a critical role in a relationship because it carries forceful and powerful threats (Jack 1999:22; Bosacki 2005:89). This silence is also a strategy that is used to control the other person or people because it does not grant space for dialogue that could resolve disputes (Bosacki 2005:89). Oppressed people usually cannot express themselves either because of the fear of the superior being in their lives or because they accept abuse as their portion.

In addition, Jack (1999) asserts that hostile silence by women in relationships is sometimes associated with depression, whereas controlling silence is “self-protective and regulates emotion in relationships without direct engagement” (Bosacki 2005:89).

Usually in relationships, the female figure avoids direct confrontation of any kind of abusive force inflicted by the male figure. This kind of silence can lead to depression or loneliness, because victims in relationships are encouraged not to discuss their relationship issues with outsiders. Some women believe in ignoring the abuse and moving on with their daily lives as if nothing is going on.

Also, there is resisting silence which as Jack (1999) states is commonly used by women who grew up in socio-cultural, religious communities and families where silence is stereotyped as good femininity (Bosacki 2005:89). According to Shangase (2000) African culture socialises women and girls not to be outspoken, as a result, they are expected not to backchat their seniors and husbands. It is clear that expected gender roles are taught from the earliest ages in the home, by the male parent who is assisted by the female parent. In her poem 'The Bride' Emi Mahmoud says "...all we could do is apologise for the things our fathers taught us through our mothers' mouth". In patriarchal societies, women are full participants in helping men enforce patriarchy.

## **2.5 Education**

One of the influential factors of patriarchy is education because most often times education makes it possible for one to get a job and therefore be financially independent. Kambarami (2006:03) explains that women are socialised to acquire those qualities which fit them into a relationship of dependence on men. This is why only basic education used to be given to females just so that they can read and write basic things. Women have been and some still continue to be deprived access to education in order to create in them dependence on their husbands or any male figure in their lives that can finance them. With globalisation and changing times, transformation in this regard is seen as more women are able to attain education and thus some households are headed by women only in the absence of male figures. According to Chirimuuta (2006), education is one way in which women can emancipate themselves from the grip of culture through male domination.

Despite movements that call for women and girls' empowerment through education, some parts of the world still remain unchanged. Kambarami (2006) notes that there are a few factors that contribute to the gender disparity in education. According to

Kambarami (2006:06), some male teachers make sexual advancements at female students or learners in return for monetary favour and failure to comply, may lead to violence or no progress in the victim's studies. UNICEF adds that, the cost of schooling also contributes to the mentioned problem. Since some parents are unable to afford the funds needed for schooling or to sustain their children throughout their studies, students then take matters into their own hands by having 'blessing' and 'blessee' relationships whereby sexual favours are exchanged for monetary favours.

Moreover, if a choice has to be made in a family as to who should go to school, the male child is often given precedence because some people still believe that it is a waste of time and finances to educate a girl child who will get married someday and no longer be useful to their family. And after marriage, the traditional expectation is that the wife will stay at home and raise her children, something that will not require education. UNICEF proposes some possible interventions to combat financial problems by offering scholarships, subsidies, food and school supplies and any kind of help needed.

Some young women are unable to go far in their studies because they get married young and sometimes become mothers at a young age. According to Kambarami (2006:06), some religions such as the Apostolic Sect, girls are married while still in primary school to older members of the sect. In patriarchal societies, married women have many duties to fulfil such as bearing children and if no help is offered, the chances of attaining education become slim.

For those women who are able to attain education as far as is possible, Kambarami (2006:06) explains that the higher women go in their professions the sooner they realise that even though they make it into the corporate world, the economy is controlled by men because they remain 'outsiders within'.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

According to Kolawole (1997:05), African women have emerged from 'silence' by rising above the many limiting borders imposed on them by patriarchal-traditional or post-colonial structures. This chapter has discussed key factors surrounding the concept of gender inequality and most importantly the issue of silence. Asiyanbola

(2005:03) concludes that it is evident that the establishment and practice of male dominance over women and children, is a historic process formed by men and women, with the patriarchal family serving as a basic unit of organisation. Even though some scholars have argued that male dominance and female subservience is natural and therefore cannot be changed, some argue that patriarchal systems are man-made and can always be changed.

## **CHAPTER THREE: DEMOLISHING GENDER BARRIERS IN ADICHLIE'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS* (2005)**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Adichie's novel, *Purple Hibiscus* is a representation of a 'coming-of-age' novel because it is centred on the growth of the protagonist Kambili from her youth to adulthood. It is written in the view of fifteen-year-old Kambili who narrates the experiences of living under the strict laws of her Catholic father. Kambili sees life in a different viewpoint when she visits her aunt Ifeoma, who is also Catholic but lives a more liberal life as would be unexpected, especially for a woman. This chapter aims to compare and contrast the characters of the women in *Purple Hibiscus*, both the young and old, Kambili as the opposite of Amaka and Beatrice as opposed to Ifeoma. Ijeoma (2015:427) remarks that women are portrayed as sex objects, inferior beings and those that must obey the rules made by men in most African novels. These characters are examined according to how the patriarchal conditions that they live in imprison and liberate them as individuals and members of their communities.

According to Klingorova and Havlicek (2015:15), the status of women in society is an outcome of the interpretation of religious texts and of the cultural institutional set-up of religious communities.

### **3.2 Kambili vs Amaka**

#### **3.2.1 Kambili**

Kambili narrates her experiences of living in different environments which one would expect to be similar since both environments are of Catholic belief, but to her surprise are not the same. One environment is her suffocating home under the rule of her father Eugene, while the other environment which is more free and democratic is her aunt's house which is headed by her aunt Ifeoma because she is not married, both families are Catholic but carry out different principles and standards of living. Kambili is the first born of her parents, followed by her brother Jaja and they live under harsh and strict conditions set by their autocrat Catholic father who frequently goes to extremes in how he leads his family while grounding his leadership role on the Bible. Kambili narrates that the silence in her family has existed for a long time "...Jaja. Mama and I spoke

more with our spirits than our lips” (16). Speaking with their spirits shows internalised words that could not be brought out externally due to the fear or constraints generated by their hostile environment. It was a norm in the Achike home that not much is said through the lips metaphorically in order to maintain a peaceful religious family.

One aspect that is evident about Kambili right at the beginning of the novel is her yearning to always earn approval from her father and mother even though sometimes it was at the expense of protecting her father to the extent of not expressing any wrongs that he might have done. One of the goals that feminism seeks to achieve is to assure women that their decisions about what they love, what they do not enjoy, plans for their lives and others are totally up to them. Throughout the novel, one notices how Kambili always strove to gain her father’s approval.

One day when the Achike family is sitting in the living room, as usual a paper is delivered for them and there is a story on corruption, in all that, Kambili says “God will deliver us, I said, knowing Papa would like my saying that” (26). After that her father nodded in agreement and the satisfaction of knowing that she made her father proud in what she says is compared to ‘melting sugar’ in Kambili’s mouth. Even instances that might come out as small, Kambili jumped at an opportunity to please her father by basing her statements on God.

Also, when schools closed for Christmas break and learners received their report cards, Kambili peered and saw that she topped the class, that night she fell asleep with the image of her in her father’s arms, the image’s face had lit up and Kambili imagined the sound of her father telling her how proud he was (53). Eugene encouraged education in both his children and always expected them to perform better than their peers at school. He is a typical example of a traditional man that practises public patriarchy, even though she encouraged Kambili to be the best student at school, her mental state was held hostage. Kambili had to go to school because her father was a well-known business man and it would be disturbing to not have his children go to school while he can afford to take both children to school. Education broadens a person’s perspective on life in general and leads to critical thinking but Kambili’s insight and knowledge was never encouraged in her home.

Even when Kambili, Jaja and their mother run for refuge at Ifeoma’s house and Eugene calls, despite the pain that Eugene caused his family, Kambili still feels an obligation

to please her father.” I did want to talk to Papa, to hear his voice, to tell him what I had eaten and what I had prayed about so that he would approve...” (268), this stems up from what she has been taught to aspire for throughout her childhood but the reality was that, deep down she wanted to be with Father Amadi and Aunty Ifeoma and never go back to the life she has at home. She prefers the two because they afford her the space to be her real self and Kambili is therefore not forced to relegate her feelings for theirs.

Kambili’s fear to associate her father with any wrong deed implies that she viewed him as an immortal being, or a god that can never err. Still, in her father’s absence, Kambili never spoke of her father’s weaknesses as if he was God who can hear everything and see everything that His children do because nothing is hidden from Him. Also, this reluctance to speak ill of her father could be from the fact that Christians believe that God knows best and therefore, Kambili views her father as the image of God. This is because she believes that her father knows what his family needs even if the decision might not necessarily please his family members. When Jaja missed communion two consecutive Sundays, Eugene was not pleased and resorted to violence which most authoritarians use as a tool to instil correct behaviour or as punishment for wrong doings. As Eugene threw a missal which is a liturgical book containing all instructions and texts necessary for the celebration of Mass throughout the year aimed at Jaja, he missed and hit the glass étagère which his wife had frequently polished and also hit the figurines of ballet dancers. Even though Beatrice acted as if the broken figurines did not matter Kambili knew that they did because of how dedicated her mother was to polishing them. In trying to console her mother, Kambili narrates “I meant to say I am sorry Papa broke your figurines, but the words that came out were, “I’m sorry your figurines broke, Mama ”(10), so she resorted to just apologise for the broken figurines without mentioning the culprit.

Eugene is depicted as a hypocrite because even though he claimed to live by Catholic rules, it seems that he did that when it best suited him. The missal is significant to the Catholic church but Eugene used it as a tool to hit Jaja as form of discipline, this incident portrays the violent side of Eugene. The act reveals double standards as done by patriarchal men who use rules as would best benefit them. Eugene punished his family by referring to the missal or Catholicism. After Beatrice greets a traditional *igwe* in a manner that is culturally expected of her, Eugene demands that his family prays

for their mother's forgiveness but when Kambili does not do the same to another *igwe*, she is reprimanded and accused of not having the spirit of discernment as that *igwe* was a man of God.

Like Christians worship and praise God for the blessings He bestows in their lives, Kambili and her family felt an obligation to praise Eugene for the good work his company was doing, so as to make him feel important and elevate him to a higher position. When Jaja did not say anything about the success of the company's new product, Kambili felt as if it was she that was silent or that Jaja would create a space for confrontation by deciding to not congratulate Papa on his achievements:

“Say something please”, I wanted to say to Jaja. He was supposed to say something now, to contribute, to compliment Papa’s new product. We always did, each time an employee from one of his factories brought a product sample for us (13).

The way in which Kambili has been raised has created a character and mannerisms that seem normal in her life, and most of which are developed through oppression but sadly she does not see the damage until she visits her aunt Ifeoma and sees how differently her aunt's family treats each other. Ifeoma is also Catholic but is open-minded than Eugene, when Kambili goes for an outing with Pastor Amadi and her cousins, her aunt suggests that she wears pants as they would be more comfortable but she retorts to saying “... I’m fine, Aunty, I said. I wondered why I did not tell her that all my skirts stopped well past my knees, that I did not own any trousers because it was sinful for a woman to wear trousers” (80). Kambili’s inability to express her own views and deprive herself of what she knew was not harmful was proof of how channelled she was. Amaka and her mother were Catholics but wore pants and Kambili was Catholic but had been taught to believe that it was sinful for a woman to wear pants. This incident is one of many that show the difference in how these two families carried out their Catholic beliefs.

Patriarchal societies expect women not to be vocal or less vocal especially concerning matters that warrant a disapproval from their side. The muting of women from a young age as girls goes further to affect the ways in which they speak. Soft speaking is one of the signs of lack of confidence or of people who are not used to talking because they are not given the platforms to. Back at Kambili’s home, during meal times especially, talks were limited to certain conversations, if at all, but when Jaja and

Kambili visit their aunt, they notice something different. It is generally said that you become what you know and your routine becomes your norm. What Kambili knew was that she should not have much to say as a woman hence when her cousins spoke at the table, to her it seemed as if they just spoke with no purpose and could therefore imply that their talks were unnecessary (120). Kambili further narrates:

“Kambili, is something wrong with the food?” Aunty Ifeoma asked, startling me. I had felt as if I were not there, that I was just observing a table where you could say anything at any time to anyone, where the air was free for you to breathe as you wished (120).

It is important to notice the choice of the word ‘air’ which can be translated to the atmosphere or mood. Kambili could have said this because of the importance of breathing and how suffocating it can be to not breath whenever one wants to, and bearing in mind how essential breathing is to human survival. Again she could be referring to the free atmosphere and space where everyone can raise their opinions without fear of being condemned. Back at home, Kambili and her mother mostly watched what they say and to who they say it, that impaired their expression skills but unfortunately that was the norm in the Achike household.

Victims of silence also have a tendency of lowering their voices when they speak, probably because of the fear to even speak, fear that what they say might not be accepted or would be used against them. Unfortunately, this tendency which is what Jack (1999) terms as hostile silence, extends to the relationships that these victims form or have with other people other than the ones that oppress them. Amaka notices that Kambili speaks in whispers, but it had become normal to Kambili that she did not even notice that. Also, if victims do not talk in whispers then they do not talk at all. Amaka is surprised by the low voice that Kambili uses when she talks (117), and this further leads to Kambili’s inability to stand up for herself: “Oh ginidi! Kambili, have you no mouth? Talk back to her!” (170).

During a quarrel between Amaka and Kambili, Ifeoma is frustrated by the fact that her niece cannot answer back to Amaka, instead she is just taking in all that Amaka says. Silenced people have no desire to stand up for themselves because of the less value that they put on themselves. Kambili’s reluctance to talk back or respond to the scorning words of her cousin is supported by Uwakweh (1995:76), who explains that voicing defines oneself, is liberating and therapeutic. It declares an individual as a

conscious being who has the ability to think and act independently. The atmosphere created by Eugene for his family has stripped the family members off their individuality because they do not act on their own thoughts but always behave in a manner that would please Eugene. Consequently, Kambili is unable to defend herself or her reason for how she acts because she has become accustomed to putting other people's needs above hers, she does not belong even to herself and has no sense of ownership.

She avers: "I wanted to talk with them, to laugh with them so much that I would start to jump up and down in one place the way they did, but my lips held stubbornly together." (141) It is not that Kambili was content with the way she carried herself, she wished to be like her cousins, but it was hard for her to act out of the set principles that she had been taught to live according to.

When Amaka's friends visited, Kambili wanted to join in their conversations and do what they did but 'her lips held stubbornly together':

I wanted to talk with them, to laugh with them so much that I would start to jump up and down in one place the way they did, but my lips held stubbornly together (141).

The above quotation shows confinement because Kambili was unable to relate even with her peers and could therefore not have fun just so that she does not embarrass herself by stuttering, Kambili runs to the toilet and this leads to further isolation. Kambili's inability to fit in due to her muted tongue leads her to being alienated, which is another result of forced silence.

Eugene takes away any ability from his family to decide on their heart's desire, he makes decisions even for matters that do not need his input. When every child completes their basic education, they start thinking about where they would love to further their studies. After the education phase, individuals go on to seek possible work places. In a conversation about university between Ifeoma, Amaka and Kambili, it is evident that Amaka already has a plan for her future while Kambili has not even thought about where and what she would study but rather avers "when the time came, Papa would decide" (130).

Kambili is most likely to study for a profession that she has no interest in which will be a form of torture and above that, she might find herself in an institution that limits her

individuality. This is a form of psychological and physical prison caused by being denied the opportunity for one to decide on issues relating to one's future.

When Eugene finally dies, it becomes hard for Kambili to comprehend it because of how she viewed him, she says:

I had never considered the possibility that Papa would die, that Papa could die. He was different from Ade Coker; from all the other people they had killed. He had seemed immortal (287).

Kambili's mixed feelings about the death of her father could explain the reason why Kambili allowed herself to endure all that her father put them through. She did not view him as an equal human being to them but one that was above them all and that justified their submission to his rules. The period that Kambili and Jaja spent with their cousins proved to be therapeutic because after a long time, when they are together, Kambili laughs, and Jaja laughs too. "It seemed so easy now, laughter. So many things seemed easy now", Kambili says.

### 3.2.2 Amaka

Amaka is Kambili's cousin and is raised in a free environment because her mother, Ifeoma as a liberated woman has passed the spirit of liberation onto her children. In comparison to Kambili, Amaka is able to express her opinions and is not scared to disagree with anything that she did not agree with. Just as Kambili notices a certain character in her aunt Ifeoma, she also notices something about her cousin Amaka:

Only her eyes were differently; they did not have the unconditional warmth of Aunty Ifeoma's. They were quizzical eyes, eyes that asked many questions and did not accept many answers (78).

'Quizzical eyes' could imply that Amaka was an inquisitive child and unless she understood something, would ask questions in order to get clarity even if it meant getting into a debate with her elders. When the time comes for Amaka to be confirmed as is Catholic practice, it is common knowledge that the confirmed individual would have to adopt an English name because according to Amaka, "when the missionaries first came, they didn't think Igbo names were good enough" (272). The missionaries believed that African names were not Godly and anyway, they were unable to pronounce them. Amaka believes that they ought to be moving ahead more because Nigeria was no longer under the colonial rule because forcing her to take an English

name would be confining herself to mental slavery. Amaka speaks like a liberated slave who refuses to live under the legacy of colonialism.

Back at Kambili's home, no one contests Eugene's decision and also, there is no platform for one to present their own point of view. Kambili lives in a world where it is a taboo for women to have the freedom of speech and seeing Amaka speak so freely put Kambili in awe. "I wonder how she did it, how she opened her mouth and had words flow easily out "(99). Kambili admires her cousin's fearless personality because she makes having a voice an easy thing.

Initially, when Amaka is given the choice to decide on an English name, she tells Father Amadi with no reluctance that she will not take an English name. This conversation drags on for so long and turns into a debate until Ifeoma gets annoyed and also tried to convince Amaka into taking the name even if it meant her not using it, for peace sake. But, Amaka still refuses and on the Easter Sunday, she does not join the rest of the young people. What Amaka does can be seen as rebellion in order to not conform, she does not care that her own mother and mostly Father Amadi are not happy but since it is a decision that has to make with her, she stands firm on it.

It is etiquette to not talk during meals on the table, Kambili is taken aback by her cousin's behaviour, she says, "I wished Amaka would keep her voice low. I was not used to this kind of conversation at the table" (97). Amaka is asking if back at Kambili's house they always ate with forks and knives, and this makes Kambili uncomfortable and would rather avoid engaging Amaka's question it. This serves as another example that Amaka always opts to act out of the ordinary and the opposite of what is usually done.

Amaka is constantly compared to her cousin Kambili. When Amaka is talking to Father Amadi about what she believes are lies bought by missionaries, Father Amadi says:

"See how your cousin sits quiet and watches?" Father Amadi asked, gesturing to me. "She does not waste her energy in picking never-ending arguments. But there is a lot going on in her mind, I can tell" (173).0

When Papa-Nnukwu dies, Amaka is badly affected because she was close to him and this is the first time Kambili sees her cousin at her weakest:

"Then I heard Amaka's sobbing. It was not loud and throaty; she laughed the way she cried. She had not learned the art of silent crying; she had not needed to "(185).

Most of Amaka's narrations show resilience and strength, because she is a young woman who stands up for what she believes in regardless of who she has to disagree with, it was not people she fears but not being truthful to what she believes in. Amaka's character is the total opposite of Kambili, a major distinguishing factor of their difference is how they are raised. According to Shangase (2000), the nurturing of patriarchy begins in childhood when young girls are socialised on how to address men in their marriages as well as men in general.

### **3.3 Beatrice versus Ifeoma**

Beatrice is Eugene's wife and mother to Kambili, while Ifeoma is Eugene's sister and mother to Amaka. Ijeoma (2015) explains that Adichie portrays Beatrice as the good woman and Ifeoma as the real woman. The Nigerian community where Mama comes from sees the good woman as one who 'suffers the effects of oppression and neglect and who must maintain a silence and passivity in order to remain good. Silence and passivity are two principal features of a good woman Uduumukwu (2007:03). On the other hand, the real woman is one who does not conform to the gender stereotypes set by patriarchal societies. She expresses her ideas and stands for what she wants, which sometimes is to be recognised as an equal human being with her opposite gender (rephrase)

#### **3.3.1 Beatrice**

Beatrice represents a patriarchal society's construction of 'the good woman'. According to Uduumukwu (2007:03) the good African woman must remain silent in any kind of oppression especially one that takes place in her home, while being silent, she must also be passive and endure all.

Van Vlaenderen and Cakwe (2003:70) argue that African traditional societies build women's identity strictly in terms of their statuses as wives and mothers. This character is not clearly defined apart from her family and home as a wife and mother, this contributes to the ways in which this character is seen to endure hardships because if stripped away from her family she most likely will not have an identity or

reason to exist. Everything that she does revolves around her husband and children. Even though African feminism believes and advocates for unity amongst men and women it is also rooted on women as wives and mothers, however, it seeks to empower women to have an identity apart from that of being a mother or wife.

Where would I go if I leave Eugene's house? Tell me, where would I go? She did not wait for Aunty Ifeoma to respond (250).

When Ifeoma tries to tell Beatrice to leave Eugene as their marriage is toxic, Beatrice cannot imagine herself living anywhere other than in Eugene's house, because that is her comfort zone. Beatrice has also grown into an identity as a mother and wife, that if she leaves her husband's home, she would be stripped off an identity that she has grown to nurture over years. She chooses to remain with Eugene even if it means enduring all kinds of abuse.

Even though Ifeoma is Eugene's sister, she constantly tries to show Beatrice that she is not obligated to endure the suffering caused by Eugene and that there is a possibility of a better and free life for her, but Beatrice seems to be blind to her own suppression. Patriarchal societies believe that it is of no use for a woman to get educated. That is the reason why Beatrice always calls Ifeoma's talks 'university talk' when Beatrice tries to show her that a woman can be liberated.

"So you say. A woman with children and no husband, what is that?"

"Me."

Mama shook her head. "You have come again, Ifeoma. You know what I mean. How can a woman live like that?" Mama's eyes had grown round, taking up more space on her face.

"*Nwunye m*, sometimes life begins when marriage ends."

"You and our university talk. Is this what you tell our students?" Mama was smiling (75).

According to Ogunyemi (1988:65), womanism is black-centred and is accommodative. While it believes in the freedom and independence of women just like feminism, unlike radical feminism, it seeks to form meaningful unions between black men and women, and children. Beatrice is a black woman who unfortunately has no idea how to create a harmonious unity between the people that she cares about and her individual needs.

Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2005:107) explains that, “the construction of strength allows both onlookers and a woman herself to de-emphasise her struggle, to detach from any assistance and to turn a blind eye to the real oppression in the context she is facing”. When Ifeoma confronts Beatrice to take a stand and counteract her abusive situation, Beatrice always made up excuses and reasons to condone the abuse or blame herself for the cause of the treatment she suffers from her husband.

Do you know how many mothers pushed their daughters at him? Do you know how many asked him to impregnate them, even, and not to bother paying a bride price.

And so? I ask you, and so? Aunty Ifeoma was shouting now (250).

Ifeoma believes that it is preposterous for her sister-in-law to suffer in silence because of what her husband does for her. Beatrice does not consider leaving her husband because she feels indebted to him since he did not take another wife when he was advised to, she thinks that it will be ungrateful of her to do so:

...you know after you came and I had the miscarriages, the villagers started to whisper. The members of our *umunna* even sent people to your father to urge him to have children with someone else...but your father stayed with me, with us (20).

Beatrice explained to her daughter how the villagers wanted her father to marry another wife when she could not give birth and as a result, Ijeoma (2015:432) remarks that, Beatrice felt indebted to her husband regardless of what happens, even to the detriment of her life. Hooks (2000:02) indicates that women who are daily beaten down mentally, physically and spiritually are marked by the fact that they accept their lot in life without questioning, without organised protest or collective anger or rage.

According to Corneliusen (2012:08), by accepting forms of abuse in order to be good women, victims are effectively silenced and reduced to devoted, submissive servants in their own lives. This is evident when Beatrice willingly and fully takes on chores that were not for her to perform and she does not mind and Kambili comments “it was not proper to let an elder person do your chores, but Mama did not mind; there was so much that she did not mind (19). Abused victims often feel obliged to always work hard without complaining or speaking because they feel a need to always be the good person for everyone else but themselves.

If Papa felt Jaja or me beginning to drift off at the thirteenth recitation of the Plea to St. Jude, he suggested we start all over. We had to get it right. I did not think, I did not even think to think, what Mama needed to be forgiven for (36).

Beatrice frequently blames Ifeoma's education for how she differently views life and deals with matters. This is a reflection that education is one of the major liberators of women from abuse. "University talk again. A husband crowns a woman's life, Ifeoma. It is what they want. It is what they think they want. But how can I blame them?" (75). Ifeoma acknowledges that men are also victims of patriarchy hence they think that they want women to be seen as their crowns, and they are sometimes not to blame, but the system is. Beatrice's view gives the impression that there is a difference in women who attained university education and those who did not, in their perceptions and behaviour.

Mama had greeted him the traditional way that women were supposed to, bending low and offering him her back so that he would put it with his fan made of the soft, straw-coloured tail of an animal. Back home that night, Papa told Mama that it was sinful. You did not bow to another human being. It was an ungodly tradition, bowing to an Igwe. So, a few days later, when we went to see the bishop at Awka, I did not kneel to kiss his ring. I wanted to make Papa proud. But Papa yanked me in the ear and said I did not have the spirit of discernment: the bishop was a man of God; the Igwe was merely a traditional ruler (94).

Sims (2016:69) explains that Christian women which she labels as 'daughters of Eve' are to look to male headship for guidance and permission, especially in the public sphere, as they are too easily misguided. When Mama bowed to the chief without Papa's consent, it was considered to be sinful just as Eve was deceived by the serpent in the garden of Eden in the absence of Adam. Patriarchal religious structures use the sin of Eve in Eden as a reference for legitimising female supervision all the time.

In a household, certain matters are mainly the woman's business while others are of the man. Things such as house décor and furnishings are traditionally known to be the woman's department but when the Achike's have to change curtains, "Kevin brought samples for Mama to look at, and she picked some and showed Papa, so he could make the final decision. Papa usually chose her favourite" (192). Eugene could have easily let his wife make such decisions but he did not want to give her any sense of power or to make a final decision in any matter, despite how small it could have been.

After Eugene broke a table on his wife's pregnant belly and caused her a miscarriage, Beatrice and the children flee to Ifeoma for refuge. While they are there, Eugene calls but Ifeoma told him 'where to get off' and does not let him talk to his wife and children. To Ifeoma's surprise, Beatrice takes the phone from Ifeoma and speaks to Eugene and agrees that he come to fetch them the next day. Going back to the abuser is a feature of abused victims because, it could either be out of fear or having made an abusive life their normal kind of living. that they do not know any other way of life outside abuse.

Finally, Beatrice breaks the chains of her suppression and since it is a taboo to divorce in patriarchal traditional African societies and also sinful according to the Bible, the only way for her to be freed from her husband is for one to die. Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2009:125) postulates that victims of abuse go through breakdowns which can be in the form of leaving home for longer than usual, staying in bed or any take other drastic and sudden measures in order to escape their responsibilities to others. The only possible 'way out for Beatrice was that she kills her husband:

When she spoke, her voice was just as calm and slow. I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka. Sisi got it for me; her uncle is a powerful witch doctor" (290).

When Beatrice poisons Eugene, Adichie shows that keeping quiet does not mean that the victim accepts the oppression but rather according to Campbell (1998:13), silence comes from fear and a sense of racial loyalty, rather than from acceptance of violence as a black cultural norm. Beatrice fears dishonouring her husband after he stayed with her and did not take another wife even when he was advised to, but also, she feels a sense of loyalty towards her husband. In the many matters that bothers Eugene that his wife does not want to be a part of her husband's problems so opts to be his peace.

Eugene's death brings freedom to his family because silence had become a normal aspect of their home hence Kambili says 'silence hangs over us, but it is a different kind of silence, one that lets me breathe. I have nightmares about the other kind, the silence of when Papa was alive "(305). The transition of how they used to be suffocated into silence is not an easy one but the silence that lies on after Eugene's death is not as prisoning as before. Even though Kambili is hopeful for change, the damage done might be irreversible or there shall always be a constant reminder:

Perhaps we will talk more with time, or perhaps we never will be able to say it all, to clothe things in words, things that have long been naked (306).

### 3.3.2 Ifeoma

Aunty Ifeoma's character is the opposite of her sister-in-law, Beatrice's, in that Ifeoma speaks her mind and refuses to conform to patriarchal laws. Ijeoma (2015:427) and Udumukwu (2007) describe two kinds of women portrayed in Adichie's novel, which are the 'good woman' and the 'real woman'. Udumukwu explains the good woman as characterised by silence and passivity, from that explanation, it is evident that Beatrice embodies the character of a good woman while Ifeoma is the direct opposite. Ifeoma has certain traits about her that shakes Kambili, for one, she speaks in a way that gives Kambili a knot in her throat (98), especially because of the way in which Aunt Ifeoma speaks to Eugene. She is not scared to express herself even if it meant displeasing Eugene, this terrified Kambili because she has never heard anyone stand up to her father, also, from the manner in which Kambili speaks about her aunt, it can be deduced that Ifeoma is fearless, even after a moment of weakness she would go back to her normal self which is having no sense of fear (189).

A good woman, as usually described by African or patriarchal societies, is one who listens to what she is told by the men in her life, firstly, by her father then on to her husband and sometimes her brothers or sons. As an educated and enlightened woman, Ifeoma is not moved by what the men in her life expects of her, she always acts on her own accord and decides for herself.

When Kambili and Jaja arrive at their aunt's place, Kambili notices women behaviours that she has not seen in her home. She says this about Ifeoma, "I watched every movement she made; I could not tear my ears way. It was the fearlessness about her, about the way she gestured as she spoke, the way she smiled to show that wide gap" (76). Even though Kambili conforms to the rules that her father sets for and her brother, deep down she knows or imagines a different environment to the one she lives in, so when she sees her aunt Ifeoma bring to reality what she has always imagined, Kambili sees that it is possible for a woman to be fearless. The fact that Kambili cannot tear

her ears away shows her fascination and admiration for the possibility of a world that has such bold women.

" Every time Aunty Ifeoma spoke to Papa, my heart stopped, then started again in a hurry. It was the flippant tone; she did not seem to recognise that it was Papa, that he was different, special. I wanted to reach out and press her lips shut and get some of that shiny bronze lipstick on my fingers" (77).

Kambili feels a sense of responsibility to ensure that her father's 'ego is not bruised' or no one disrespects him. On the one side, Kambili is very careful about what people say or do to her father. It is hard for her to understand how other people especially a woman could speak to her father in a way that does not make him feel as powerful and important as he wishes and is treated by his own family.

A patriarchal society only recognises a woman as a legal minor in that they are not suitable to make decisions for themselves hence decision-making is left in the hands of the men in their lives. Furthermore, this leads to women not being recognised or taken into account. When Ifeoma speaks to her father (is it Ifeoma's father?), because he is from a patriarchal society he therefore highlights the fact that women are not as important as men.

Did I not go to the missionary school, too?

But you are a woman. You do not count.

Eh? so I don't count? (83)

Women are taught to aspire to be wives and mothers or to take any role that links them to the household, as it is famously said that 'a woman's place is the kitchen'. The assertion that education is only important for males and not females is also a contributing factor to ensuring that women do not have the skills that allow them to take on any other role in the household. Even in situations where women work, especially in the postcolonial communities, high-ranked positions are seen as only suitable for men and not women. When Ifeoma's father tells his daughter that his spirit will intercede for her so that she may receive a good man to take care of her home, Ifeoma prefers that his father's spirit rather intercedes to quicken her promotion to senior lectureship position instead (83).

Whaley (2001:14) shows that there is some male backlash caused by women's growing desire to be more independent of men. This painful period of transition is a time of tremendous misunderstanding and hostility between the sexes.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

Amaka and her mother Ifeoma represent new voices in the African post-colonial literature and their characters challenge the portrayal of African women as inferior, submissive and silent. On the other hand, Kambili and Beatrice portray the suppressed woman in Africa that has been confined into a prison of silence. The latter characters finally escape towards the end of the novel and offer a breakthrough for the marginalised woman even though the method of escape was extreme. This shows that oppression can lead to severe damage on the victims to an extent of them considering extreme measures in trying to solve a problem therefore better solutions should be established.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: BREAKING DIASPORIC GENDER STEREOTYPES IN WALKER'S *THE COLOUR PURPLE* (1982)**

### **4.1 Introduction**

*The Colour Purple* is an epistolary novel written through a series of letters by two sisters who are estranged and have no other form of contact except through writing to each other. Celie and Nettie endure abuse from their stepfather, including other men, until they are separated and the only way that they can communicate is by writing letters. This chapter examines Alice Walker's novel, *The Colour Purple* in the context of African diaspora. It also attempts to clarify the concepts of womanism and intersectionality by including the four definitions Walker gives to explain what a womanist is. The concept of intersectionality is used as part of the analysis of this chapter. Davis (2008:68) relevantly defines it as the interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power. Davis' definition is suitable for the analysis of this novel because it does not only deal with sexism but also racism and classism. According to Sinha (2002:86) "*The Colour Purple* is a song of joy and triumph; triumph of a woman's struggle against racism, sexism and social determinism eventually leading to the wholeness of her being". This chapter mainly focuses on four female characters, namely, Celie, Nettie, Sofia and Shug.

### **4.2 Celie**

Celie is the narrator and protagonist in the novel. She is an uneducated black poor woman and is fourteen-years old when the novel starts. She goes through many phases of self-discovery as influenced by the different people in her life. Walker does not really give the reader much information about Celie but the letters serve as a source of information about her and the other characters in the novel, also these letters reveal her internal conflict (Sinha 2002:86).

#### **4.2.1 Domestic violence**

Domestic violence is any form of abuse that occurs in familial settings such as the home, it can be between parents and their children or a husband and wife. Celie endures domestic violence in the form of physical and sexual abuse from both her

step-father, husband and her step-children. Victims of domestic violence are silenced by their loyalty to their abuser because of the relation between them. The novel opens with a threatening statement that silences Celie and gives the reader an understanding of the way of communication and the writing style throughout the novel, “you better not tell nobody but God. It’d kill your mammy” (01). The writing of letters can be compared to diary entries which are personal. In this novel, these letters serve as an indication that Celie has been verbally silenced and thus resorted to finding an alternative way in which she can express herself and that is through writing. Sinha (2002:87) notes that Celie is deprived of her right to even speak of herself with anybody. Throughout the novel, Celie never really disagrees aloud with her abusers but rather frequently writes to her sister Nettie as a form of relieving her feelings.

Marriage is supposed to be an agreement between a man and woman who love each other. Patriarchal societies practise arranged marriages which Becker *et al.* (2017) explain as one in which the agreement for marriage is not undertaken by the groom and bride but by their parents, relatives or contracted external parties. In *The Colour Purple*, Albert, who is continuously referred to as Mr \_\_\_\_\_ by Celie, makes an agreement with Pa to marry one of his daughters. Young women are often forced into marriages because their parents gain something in exchange for their daughters’ hand in marriage. Pa makes an arrangement with Mr \_\_\_\_\_ to marry Celie, Mr \_\_\_\_\_ does not really marry for love but because he needs someone that will take care of his house and children while also attending to his sexual needs, almost like a house-keeper. Celie highlights this forceful factor by saying that she does not love Mr \_\_\_\_\_ and neither does he, but she just married him because his father made her do it (64). This shows no platform for Celie to make her own choices because they are made for her.

Another form of abuse that Celie and Nettie experiences as children is sexual abuse by their father. Incidents of sexual abuse are evident in the novel. Celie’s sexuality is controlled by men and her submission is enforced through violence (Sinha 2002:94). She tells her father that she can fix herself up for him. “I duck into my room and come out wearing horsehair, feathers, and a pair of our new mammy high heel shoes. He beat me for dressing trampy but he do it to me anyway” (07). Despite calling Celie trampy, Pa rapes her anyway because patriarchal men view women as sexual objects, nothing can stand in the way of them satisfying their sexual needs.

Mr wanted to marry Nettie but Pa refused and offered him Celie instead. Pa prefers to give Mr \_\_\_\_\_ Celie because in his words "...she the oldest anyway. She ought to marry first. She ain't fresh tho, but I spect you know that. She spoiled. Twice" (07). Spoiled twice in this case means that she has given birth to two children and therefore is not fresh and therefore not much use. Throughout this marriage, Celie continued to be subjugated by her husband.

When Celie is married to Mr \_\_\_\_\_, she meets Shug, a blues singer and an ex-lover of Mr \_\_\_\_\_. One day when Celie is left alone with Shug while Albert is out with Shug's husband, Grady, Celie tells her about a day when she was raped by her father:

While I trim his hair he look at me funny. He a little nervous too, but I don't know why, till he grab hold of me and cram me up tween his legs...it hurt me, you know, I say. I was just going on fourteen (113).

Women's bodies are seen as nothing else but sexual objects by some men, even the way they talk or look at them is sexual. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) add that, many women are sexually objectified and treated as objects to be valued for their use by others, usually men. When Mr \_\_\_\_\_ comes to marry, Pa calls Celie to showcase or parade her body for her future husband so that he can see what he is marrying.

He say, Let me see her again. Pa call me. *Celie*, he say. Like it wasn't nothing. Mr \_\_\_\_\_ want another look at you. I go stand in the door...Pa rattle his newspaper. Move up, he won't bite, he say (10).

Amongst the important constituents of marriage is sex. Sex is supposed to be an intimate activity between two people who love each other and is therefore, a way of creating a bond between lovers. If it is forced, sex becomes beneficial to the perpetrator and hurts the victim, such as in the case of rape. When Celie explains her sexual interactions with Albert to Sofia she says:

You know the worst part is? She say. The worst part is I don't think he notice. He git up there and enjoy himself just the same. No matter what I'm thinking. No matter what I feel. It just him. Heart feeling don't even seem to enter into it (66).

...I don't like it at all what is it like? He git up on you, heist your nightgown round your waist, plunge in. most times I ain't there. He never know the difference. Never ast me how I feel, nothing. Just do his business, get off, go to sleep (78).

Besides being viewed as sex objects, women are also seen as good-for-nothing but house-keepers and children-rearing beings. Van Vlaenderen and Cakwe (2003:70)

argue that in patriarchal societies, women's' identity is constructed strictly in terms of their status as wives and mothers. Being a good house-keeper and producing children is what is defined as the perfect woman in patriarchal societies. "And you right about Celie, here. Good house-keeper, good with children, good cook. Brother couldn't have done better if he tried" (21). In patriarchal societies, men do not participate in domestic work including child-rearing. Such tasks are considered to be the exclusive domain of women (Asiyanbola 2005:02). Harpo could not even help Celie carry water in the house because in his words, it is women work and he is a man (22).

In patriarchal communities, the well-being of a woman as an individual is often not taken into consideration, what usually matters is what they can offer hence a women's aspirations of personal being are seldom of importance to their abusers. They are stereotypically treated as the 'other'. Sims (2016:04) corroborates that the submissive woman gives up her own identity and accepts an identity as an extension of someone else, such as Albert's wife or Olivia's mother. Celie says when Mr\_\_\_\_\_ came to get her to take care his rotten children, "he never ast me nothing bout myself..." (114). This graphically shows that Albert had no care whatsoever about Celie except for what she can offer. When Celie was taken for marriage, she was still young and her chances of getting educated or enjoying her youthful life were stripped away, she was forced to become a responsible woman at an early age which disrupted any possibilities of her growing up like other children.

Whenever a woman is seen as trying to take care of herself or her needs, she is often reminded of her domestic duties and is therefore seen as negligent. When Celie decides to voice out her opinion and how her family treated her, Mr\_\_\_\_\_ slaps her and calls her a bitch and says, "what will people say, you running off to Memphis like you don't have a house to look after?" (203). Bostock *et al.* (2009) explains that leaving an abusive relationship includes financial hardships, loss of family home, isolation and others. Celie is made to feel guilty for wanting what's best for her by being given the family trap since it is a taboo in patriarchal societies, for a woman to leave her house in charge of the man.

Mr\_\_\_\_\_ 's sister Kate, witnesses and knows about the harsh treatment that Celie is put through and just as she is about to leave after visiting Celie, she encourages Celie to fight them, she says "Celie, I can't do it for you. You \_\_\_\_\_ got to fight them for yourself

“(22). Victims of gender abuse are often unable to fight their own battles with the hope that someone else will show up and fight for them, an outsider that is not directly involved in the situation. Hooks (2000:11) postulates that truly oppressed people know it even though they may not be engaged in organised resistance or are unable to express in written form, the nature of their oppression.

According to Bowman (2003:849), feminist explanations for domestic violence are mostly rooted in individual psychology and family dysfunctionality. Others focus on male aggression. Violence is also a tool that patriarchs use to tame their victims. Emecheta in Cousins (2001:74) suggests that the notion of masculinity is sometimes linked to a man’s ability to control and discipline his wife, by beating her if necessary. Celie writes about how her father once beat her, she says:

“...he beat me today cause he say I winked at a boy in church. I may have got somethin in my eye but I didn’t wink. I don’t even look at mens. That’s the truth. I look at women, tho, I’m not scared of them” (05).

Androphobia, which is a fear of men is also exposed from Celie’s statement, the idea of her looking at men would unsettle her as compared to looking at women. Celie gives the idea of security and comfort that she gets from being around women, probably because of the experiences that she has had with men, this could also explain why Celie is seen to engage in a homosexual relationship with Shug. Hollander and Haber (1992) note that homosexuality is a process of learning to recognise and accept what one was all along. The concept of ‘coming out’ suggests that the lesbian has always been inside, awaiting a debut. Some women are allegedly turned to homosexuality as a result of sexual abuse, and Celie experienced countless sexual harassments, from her father straight to her husband. Celie could have turned lesbian due to both the above-mentioned perceptions. Her sexual relationship with Shug could be a result of her sexual discovery and orientation since her sexuality has never belonged to her since a young age. Furthermore, it is also a result of her past sexual experiences of forced sexual encounters so she finds no intimacy with men.

In the short run, the more women who break out of the traditional female role and assert themselves in new ways, the more threatened male egos there are (Russell and Van de Ven,1976:14).

Albert's controlling behaviour is extended to even the way Celie dresses. "I don't know, I say. Mr\_\_\_\_\_not going to let his wife wear pants" (146). Also, Celie's movements were restricted to certain extents, a traditional proverb from the Netherlands says "a good wife, an injured leg and a pair of torn trousers stay at home". Patriarchal communities view women as only suitable enough to be in private domains such as the homes, when they are in public they need male supervision.

Women are also categorised under child-like stereotypes because they are considered to be legal minors regardless of their age, a woman is viewed as a person who cannot make decisions on her own including those that are about her own life. This means that even the treatment that victims of patriarchy suffer is similar to that which children experience, hence Celie explains that Mr\_\_\_\_\_beat her like he beat the children (23). The way in which men communicate with women is no different to that in which they communicate with their children, moreover, the punishments for disobeying the male's rule are also similar. This is the reason why men see no reason to discuss and talk to women like adults concerning any disagreements, men would rather beat the disobedience out of the women since it is assumed that the women are not mature enough to be spoken to.

Bostock *et al.* (2009) say that women who have experienced abuse are more likely to suffer from emotional problems such as lack of self-worth. Self-esteem and worth play an important role in crippling a victim of gender abuse in that when the victim does not see herself as anyone with value she tends to succumb to any form of abuse that they get because there is no way out. Celie's self-esteem is crippled by comments about how she looks and her lack of literacy.

#### 4.2.2 Female relationships

Female relationships are usually called 'sisterhood' by feminists, Abraham (2015:275) defines this term as used among feminists to express the connection of women who are not biologically related but are joined in solidarity. Female relationships can be in the form of mother to daughter, sister to sister as well as sexual. *The Colour Purple* depicts a few female relationships because such relationships have always been viewed as tools of liberation for women by Alice

Walker. Celie's female relationships have been the driving force in keeping her sane and pushing her towards her freedom.

Celie's first documented female relationship is between her and Nettie. This relationship is biological and has existed since their childhood. When their mother dies, Celie takes up the role of her younger sister's caregiver since she was the eldest, also, due to the absence of parental protection, Celie plays the role of a mother to Nettie (Singh and Gupta 2010:219). Nettie and Celie stayed with their step-father, Alphonso, who they referred to as Pa. They initially thought that he was their biological father until new information was discovered that proved otherwise. Pa is very abusive and took away Celie's children which were fathered by him though incidents of rape. She thinks one of them was sold to a couple in Monticello. "He took my other little baby, a boy this time. But I don't think he kilt it" (03).

Celie looked out for her younger sister, even protecting her from their abusive stepfather. One day when the girls' mother is not feeling well and can therefore not perform her wifely sexual duties, Pa opts to take Nettie but Celie offers herself instead since she was the oldest between the two. "I duck into my room and come out wearing horsehair, feathers, and a pair of our new mammy high heel shoes. He beat me for dressing trampy but he do it to me anyway" (07). Celie is a typical example of a black woman who puts other people's needs before herself. These kind of women would rather personally suffer instead of seeing their loved ones go through hardships. Nettie remembers her sister's kindness when she writes "But God, I miss you, Celie. I think about the time you laid yourself down for me. I love you with all my heart" (128).

Nettie continues with her education while Celie is pregnant and Nettie would share what she learnt from school with her sister after school. Also, Kovac Jurkovic (2016:19) explains that when Nettie moves to Africa, she continues to teach her sister by using her experiences in Africa to broaden Celie's view of the world through her letters. These views include how patriarchal societies treat women also likening it to how coloured people are treated in America. Celie and Nettie have always looked out for each other until Nettie returns back home with Samuel and Celie's children and they were all reunited into one big family.

When Celie encounters Shug for the first time, it is through a picture and Celie instantly adores this woman. Shug also reminds Celie of her mother. When Shug is brought to

Celie's house due to illness and Celie nurses her, these two women spend a lot of time together and according to Kovac Jurkovic (2016:15), throughout their time together, Shug teaches Celie about God, spirituality, sexuality and many other things". Shug and Celie enter into a lesbian relationship in which Shug teaches Celie to own her sexuality and makes her realise that sex should be a pleasure for both partners. Moreover, Shug teaches Celie to know her own body and to take pride in it. The relationship between Celie and Shug is not only sexual but Shug also gives Celie different views of life, such as the image of God as not white like Celie and Nettie have always believed. Shug also encourages Celie to do something that will bring her money such as sewing, in this way, Celie does not need to depend on any man for financial dependence.

When Celie moves to Memphis with Shug, she is encouraged to start a sewing business in order to make money and not be dependent on Shug's money. This gives Celie a sense of value as she will have something to call hers. When Celie gathers the courage to stand up for herself and tries to leave with Shug, after discovering Nettie's letters that were hidden by Mr\_\_\_\_\_ (incomplete thought). Everyone was shocked to see that Celie is able to stand up for herself, she writes, "Sofia so surprise to hear me speak up she ain't chewed for ten minutes" (202). According to Cruz (2015) and Lewis (2003), silence is not an indication of submissiveness, subservience and obedience but rather of a hidden transcript used by women for survival in a patriarchal society and Celie is finally breaking the chains of silence and removing the endurance mask. In addition, Mr\_\_\_\_\_ discourages her by saying that "she is ugly, skinny and shaped funny. That she is too scared to open her mouth to people. All she fit to do in Memphis is be Shug's maid" (208). Albert's statement shows that he is aware that Celie has been silenced, which means that he has succeeded in that regard, that she cannot even open her mouth to speak, which is one of the reasons he is able to control her. Again the fact that Celie can only be good as a housekeeper comes up. When Celie finally breaks off the silence, Mr\_\_\_\_\_ laughs and says "who you think you is? You can't curse nobody. Look at you. You black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman. Goddam, he say, you nothing at all" (209). Economically submissive women and those without any legal rights, are entirely at their husbands' mercy and thus silenced as active participants in the public life (Corneliussen 2012:20).

"Us both be hitting Nettie's schoolbooks pretty hard, cause us know we got to be smart to git away" (09), Celie knows that education can help her escape her oppressive situation and thus even when Nettie was around, they read together. When Celie is in Memphis she gets friends and Darlene is one of them and tries to teach Celie the acceptable and respected manner of talking. Celie says that every time she says something the way she saw it, Darlene corrected her until she said it some other way (218). Darlene kept on trying, she also tries to show Celie the importance of reading and education by saying that, "Think how much better Shug feel with you educated, she say. She won't be shame to take you anywhere "(218). This motivated Celie to want to learn more and make Shug proud of her.

Through Shug's help, Celie becomes a better version of herself because she is liberated. Ijeoma (2015:279) says that with Shug, "Celie resurfaces from a silent, dominated, abusive and passive life into an active and independent life". She learns to love herself and her body and not to need validation from anyone else, she gains financial independence by starting a sewing business for herself. Financial dependence is one of the tools that patriarchy uses to disable women of any kind of freedom as it knocks down their self-esteem.

Sofia is Celie's step-son's bride and a no-nonsense young woman, this to an extent that Celie envies her strength and boldness. "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 cant. What that? She say. Fight. I say (40)." It is generally often said that 'you become what you know' which means that experiences of life build a person. When a father abuses a mother or any other woman, the children are watching and if nothing is done to address such unhealthy environments, then the children adopt that as a normal way of life or relationships. Pingley (2017:11) explains that the exposure of parental violence to children often leads the children to experience violence themselves or go on to violate others. Harpo is Mr \_\_\_\_\_'s son and in a conversation with Celie about his wife Sofia, when Celie tells Harpo that Sofia is a good wife, loves him, is hardworking and God-fearing and therefore there is no reason why Harpo should ill-treat her. Harpo says he wants his wife to do as he says just like Celie does for his father (63). Celie also envies how Sofia would continue with a conversation when Harpo and Mr \_\_\_\_\_ would come in, unlike Celie, who would be terrified and opt to keep quiet and attend to the men.

Looking at how Sofia always fought for herself against Harpo and Albert motivates Celie to also do the same since she has seen that it is possible.

#### 4.3 Nettie

Nettie is Celie's younger sister, and not much is known about this character before she moves to Africa. She is a flat character in that, critics say that her character is minimum and unnecessary for the novel. Despite such critics, Suresh (2014) notes that although Nettie is never really always present, her significance is definitely felt throughout the novel. Moreover, though younger than Celie, Nettie is more confident, intelligent and strong in terms of character. When Mr \_\_\_\_\_ first approached Pa, his intentions were to take Nettie as a wife but Alphonso refused, it seems he cared more about her than he did about Celie, hence he says that Nettie is too young and has no experience (06).

Throughout their childhood years, Nettie seems to be more interested in educating herself than Celie. Celie tells Shug that Nettie was "smart as anything. Read the newspapers when she was little more than talking. Did figures like they was nothing. Talked real well too. And sweet. There never was a sweeter girl" (120). Although, another reason could be the fact that Pa kept Nettie in school for a longer period since she never got pregnant and her studies were therefore not disturbed by anything. When Nettie takes the initiative of running away from Pa's abusive household and flees to her sister and husband's home for shelter, this shows that she is bold and strong (Lindberg-Seyersted 1992:86). Nettie displays a bold and sassy attitude since she is not scared to save herself from what she sees as abuse.

After Nettie is chased away from Celie's house because she turned down Mr \_\_\_\_\_'s sexual advancements, she finds a job as a house-keeper and works for Samuel and Corrine who later go to Africa as missionaries and take Nettie along. When Nettie arrives in Africa, she realises so many things concerning the treatment of girls and women and that the way in which men treat women in Africa is not different from how they treat those in America, making patriarchy universal. Corneliusen (2012:78) says that the victimisation of women does not depend on class or culture, it is universal.

The Olinka do not believe girls should be educated. When I asked a mother why she thought this, she said: A girl is nothing to herself; only to

her husband can she become something. What can she become? I asked. Why, she said, the mother of his children? But I am not the mother of anybody's children, I said, and I am something. You are not much, she said (156).

Like a typical patriarchal community, the Olinka tribe do not see the importance of educating a girl child because the education will be a waste when she will eventually be getting married, having a husband and children. If given the option to choose between educating a girl-child and boy-child, families such as the Olinka would give the boy-child first preference over the girl-child.

Why can't Tashi come to school? She asked me. When I told her the Olinka don't believe in educating girls she said, quick as a flash, They're like white people at home who don't want coloured people to learn (157).

According to BBC report (2006), one of the reasons why girls are not educated is because African patriarchal societal perspective favours boys over girls because boys maintain the family lineage. When Nettie goes to Africa, she, like the Olinka women is not seen as being much of a person or as valuable because she basically lives for herself since she does not have a husband or children. Young girls are taught to aspire to marriage and being mothers, they spent most of their childhood years being taught how to be the perfect wife that is approved by the society. In cases where girls are privileged to go to school, their learning experience is not a pleasant one. Unicef reports that for girls that are in schools, they are usually side-lined and overlooked in classrooms by their teachers, such as seeing boys only as eligible to be class representatives and always expecting boys to score higher marks than girls. When Olivia goes to school, Nettie explains that she is lonely because she is viewed as an outsider in school and not belonging. "They are not mean to her, it is just what is it? Because she is where they are doing "boys' things" they do not see her (157). This according to Collins (1986:14), is known as being an 'outsider within'.

Tashi knows she is learning a way of life she will never live. But I did not say this. The world is changing, I said. It is no longer a world just for boys and men (161).

Even though Tashi knew that she might not get the opportunity to use what she learns from Olivia, she still had the desire to want to learn and know. This reflects that the girls who are deprived of education are not necessarily unaware of the benefits of being educated. Moreover, it would be hard for a man to make rules or decisions that

do not make sense to a woman who also knows as much as the man does. Sims (2016:06) explains that a submissive wife must accept her husband's decisions even if she knows better and can execute them better herself. Part of being a figure of authority includes the fact that men do not want to be questioned or challenged. Another reason for not educating women is to ensure that the women do not have enough knowledge about issues in their surroundings and are not critical thinkers, this would easily sanction them to agree to everything that they are told since they do not know better. "The men do not like it: who wants a wife who knows everything her husband knows? They fume "(172).

Our women are respected here, said the father. We would never let them tramp the world as American women do. There is always someone to look after the Olinka woman. A father. An uncle. A brother or nephew. Do not be offended, Sister Nettie, but our people pity women such as you who are cast out, we know not from where, into a world unknown to you, where you must struggle all alone, for yourself. So I am an object of pity and contempt, I thought, to men and women alike (162).

It is ironical when an oppressive system thinks that it is protecting and looking out for its vulnerable people by subjugating them, while it is hostile to them. The Olinka people think that having a male figure to look after their women is respecting them, but the women see this as abuse because they are deprived of themselves and freedom to do what they wish to do. Those within patriarchal communities disguise the subordinate role as a blessing for a woman to have to carry the burden of making important and big decisions (Sims 2016:05). Also, Nettie mentions that among the Olinka people, if a woman refuses or does not comply by refusing to have a male figure to look over her, she will be cast out and will therefore struggle for life out there alone. According to Johnson (2004:388) a disobedient wife can be cast out of her husband's clan. Nettie also thought to herself that both men and women participate in this relegation of women.

There is a way that the men speak to women that reminds me too much of Pa. They listen just long enough to issue instructions. They don't even look at women when women are speaking (163).

The unsatisfactory state that men get from women and girls is not a result of the women's actions but rather their birth-right. Thus, once one is born female, that already determines her destiny. That destiny is that she will never ever be good enough to be accepted as anything better than just a female. This is the reason why in patriarchal

societies, the birth of a boy-child is celebrated more than that of a girl-child. Nettie explains that, when Tashi's father died, Tashi felt like a failure because she had never made her father proud or pleased him even though "all her young life she has tried to please him, never quite realising that, as a girl, she never could "(166). In addition, just as Pa made an arrangement to marry off one of his daughters to Albert, Nettie explains that cases of such arranged marriages are practised because "many of the women rarely spend time with their husbands. Some of them were promised to old or middle-aged men at birth" (167).

Nettie's strong character has been a significant factor in the encouragement of Celie to keep on fighting, both for herself and her estranged children. Also, because of her personality, Nettie has been able to survive ever since she fled her step-father's house.

#### **4.4 Shug Avery**

Shug Avery is one of the strongest female characters in the novel. She is Mr \_\_\_\_\_'s ex-lover and the major influence in the turnaround of Celie's life.

##### **4.4.1 Blues Singer**

Shug is Grady's wife, Albert's ex-lover and Celie's lover at some point. She is a blues singer and her personality breaks the traditional marker of a black woman because according to Sinha (2002:98), by singing and performing, Shug becomes the embodiments of feminist existential freedom in choosing her career as a blues singer and in refusing to settle down for a life of domesticity. Her personality breaks the traditional label of black women because she drinks and smokes, also wears pants which are seldom worn by women (Ling 2016:64). Women are socialised to depend on men, Shug earns a living by singing and is therefore financially independent and her personality is that of a strong woman who will not be dictated to by a man. In addition, the places in which Shug performs, most women would be prohibited to step into, by their men, and would rather be expected to stay at home.

Sinha (2002:98) explains that "Shug's character functions not only as the opposite of Celie but also as a means through which Celie becomes conscious of and empowered

to address the conditions that oppress her". Shug is a key character in the improvement of Celie's life, because it is not until Celie meets her that she learns to see her own value and does not depend on anyone for validation.

#### 4.4.2 Sexuality

Compulsory heterosexuality is the opinion that a person can only be involved in a relationship with a person of the opposite sex, that is male with female. Shug Avery is portrayed as a person with empowering traits that relate to Alice Walker's definition of a womanist (Janusiewicz 2014:08). One of the definitions of a womanist according to Walker (2005) is that, a womanist loves other women, sexually and/or non-sexually, and Shug's relationship with Celie portrays this aspect of a womanist as defined by Walker. Almost all her life, Celie has been told how ugly, dark and worthless she is, and according to Sinha (2002:92), Shug's small gestures such as writing a song for her make Celie feel that she is of value. After Celie explains to Shug how her husband beats her, Shug says "I felt different about him. If you was my wife, I'd cover you up with kisses stead of licks, and work hard for you too" (111).

Shug is the first person to love Celie other than Nettie, and through her, Celie comes to love herself...under Shug's guidance she discovers the loveliness of her own body and the beauty of lovemaking (Sinha 2002:93). Celie has never really experienced any form of love except that of her sister Nettie. Her romantic relationships have also not been pleasant because the two men he was involved with sexually, the engagement was through force and not because she loved them as a different gender. When Celie meets Shug, she finds both a sister and a lover in her, Celie sees Shug as a goddess, she says:

The most beautiful woman I ever saw. She more pretty then my mama. She bout ten thousand times prettier then me (06).

The high esteem with which Celie considers Shug makes it easier for her to have any kind of relationship with her because already Celie has high regard for her and one could say looks up to Shug.

He's a man. I write on the paper. Yeah, she say. He is and I know how you feel. About men. But I don't feel that way. I would never be fool enough to take any of them seriously, she say. But some mens can be a lots of fun (254).

Celie's general view about men and the way in which they treat women is evidently regarded as inconsiderate human beings. Before discovering her sexuality, Celie has always believed that heterosexuality is compulsory and therefore a woman can only be intimate with a man. Also, familial or relationship structures seem normal to her when a man and woman come together but Shug tells her that she does not view things as she does. Despite this, Shug does acknowledge that some men are tolerable.

Furthermore, Shug demonstrates that she owns her sexuality and has control over whatever she decides to do when she finds a younger man to be in a relationship with so as to feed her sexual needs. Even though Shug knows that the relationship would not last, she wanted it anyway, so that she remembers how it feels to be needed by a man at her age.

Shug's character as a total difference to Celie is a vehicle of transformation and new possibilities that Celie never thought of such as her sexuality, the image of God and others.

## 4.5 Sofia

Sofia is Harpo's wife who met Celie and her husband Albert when Harpo came to introduce her with intentions to marry. Sofia is a black woman warrior; her aggression is her means of preventing others from subjugating her and her defiance in the face of brutal treatment provides Celie a model of resistance against sexual and racial oppression (Cheung 1988:167). Sofia's character has been hugely influenced by her environment as a child in her home, added by observing how her mother was ill-treated by their father.

### 4.5.1 Physical fighter

Concepts of masculinity and femininity include the portrayal of physical strength in which, most times men are physically stronger than women hence women are unable to fight back in acts of physical abuse. While talking to Celie, Sofia explains that she grew up in an unhealthy abusive family, Ling (2016:07) mentions that Sofia's mother was under the rule of and foot of her domineering husband because "Anything he say,

goes" (41). Sofia and her sisters were affected by the domestic abuse in their home and that had an influence on how they carried themselves and behaved. Most of their actions were for their protection from any male that could try to hurt them. Ling (2016:07) supports this idea by stating that, because Sofia and her sisters were determined not to live as their mother, enduring all the abuse and violence, they physically fought in order to defend themselves from any form of abuse from men in general.

Sofia don't even deal in little ladyish things such as slaps. She ball up her fit, draw back, and knock two of Squeak's side teef out. Squeak hit the floor. One toof hanging on her lip, the other one upside my cold drink glass (84).

According to Farda (2014:42), Sofia is different from Celie because she used to fight every male in the family, in contrast, Celie never stood up for herself against her father, husband and her children, never mind physically fighting. Sofia was physically independent and also willing to defend herself at all costs because in her view, that is what she needed to survive in her own family. "She say, 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 uncles. A girl child ain't safe in a family of men" (40). This is evidence that girls and women become victims of patriarchy and gender oppression first from the families that they are born into and then later in their own homes by their husbands.

One day Harpo comes home badly bruised with cut lips, eyes shut and a face full of bruises because Sofia beat him up, one would swear that he was fighting with a man (37). All the fights that Sofia was involved in before she met Harpo were practice for her marriage life and for the world out there. Sofia becomes difficult for Harpo to control as he has never seen a woman as fierce as Sofia. Because Harpo grew up in a home where he witnessed his father enforce patriarchy towards Celie in the form of violence and abuse, he also feels the need to adopt and want to create a home similar to the one he grew up in.

You still bothering Sofia? I ast. She my wife, he say. That don't mean you got to keep on bothering her, I say. Sofia love you, she a good wife. Good to the children and good looking. Hardworking. Godfearing and clean. I don't know what more you want. ..I want her to do what I say, like you do for Pa (63).

According to Harpo, with an influence from his father, a wife is owned by her husband and therefore the husband can exercise any kind of action against what belongs to

him. A woman is never an owner of her own self, when the ownership is shifted from her father through marriage, the husband assumes ownership of her. Even though Sofia tried to be a good wife, she is prone to abuse for the sake of being a woman and used as a tool to exercise male authority.

#### 4.5.2 Bold and fearless

Sofia is an unusual example of how a woman should behave, especially towards her husband. When Harpo takes Sofia to meet his family for the first time, even from the way they walk to the house Celie can see that Sofia is a different kind of woman. Kovac Jurkovic (2016:21) highlights that even in their encounter when Harpo brings Sofia home to meet his father, it is obvious that Sofia is a strong and dauntless person. Celie could tell that Sofia is no ordinary woman because “she was in the front a little”, leading the way (31). Immediately after the introductions, Jurkovic (2016:21) explains that Sofia is not afraid of Harpo’s father and therefore speaks her mind even though it is the first time she sees Mr \_\_\_\_\_. From her fearless speech, Mr \_\_\_\_\_ instantly realises that Sofia might not be a good woman for his son because she is not an example of a perfect submissive and passive wife material. Patriarchal men are also authoritative in that; they dictate their wives’ lives. Harpo complains about his wife not ‘minding’ what he says because she always responds back. His grounding of complaints is that since Sofia is a married woman, she needs to act accordingly and stay at home to look after her husband and children, but Sofia does not heed any of that because if she puts her mind on something, she goes right ahead with it. Mr \_\_\_\_\_’s solution to his son is using physical force to tame his wife. “You ever hit her? Mr \_\_\_\_\_ ast. Harpo look down at his hands. Naw suh, he say low, embarrass. Well how do 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 \_\_\_\_\_’s advice to Harpo is proof that patriarchal men resort to physical abuse to exercise their authority and keep the order that they would like to see in their families. Physical abuse does not work with Sofia because she has mastered the art of fighting back through physical punches, so she would be a worthy opponent to a male opposition.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

At first, Celie is the main female character that is in need of liberation as compared to the other three women discussed in this chapter, but the chapter has revealed that each of the women in the novel have their fair share of being victims of gender stereotyping. This chapter has demonstrated that marginalised women often depend on the relationships of sisterhood to break metaphorical prisons of patriarchy such as silence, sexual abuse and domestic violence. According to Foster and Davis (2009:26) for many African American women authors, freedom in its many varied forms is a persistent concern to write about. Despite the initial difficulty for Celie to obtain her freedom through the help and influence of the women around her she was able to succeed in achieving the freedom she desired. The definitions of womanism by Alice Walker have also been evident in the analysis of this chapter. *The Colour Purple* is one of the important literary texts in the feminist literature because even though it was published a long time ago, it is still relevant in the present times.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study sought to address the problem of silencing women by examining literary texts authored by marginalised female authors. The chosen texts for the study have quite a gap in their publication periods, with Walker's *The Colour Purple* in 1982 and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* in 2005. The main aim was to show how hard it can be to address problems in a large marginalised society than it would be for a small marginalised society, Alice Walker was more concerned with giving a narrative of intersectionality, while Chimamanda Adichie gave a common gender disparity narrative of Africa by using Nigeria.

In addition, the study has shown that even though black women can be viewed as a homogenous marginalised group of people, their location and history plays a huge role in the different oppressions that they go through. According to Crenshaw (1991:1261), there is no one size fits all type of feminism. Certain groups of women have multi-layered facets in life that they have to deal with. The two texts which were examined by this study have displayed certain similarities that lead to the silencing of women through patriarchy, factors such as violence, religion and culture seem to be common determiners of such an oppression. The theoretical grounding of this study in chapter one, textual analysis of selected novels in chapters three and four have revealed the long strides that the feminist movement has taken and still continues to take in the present time. Patriarchal societies have always used the muted tongues of the women that they suppress as a way of continuing to instil fear and abuse.

As mentioned above, there are visible similarities between Walker's *The Colour Purple* (1982) and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2005). Firstly, Kambili and Beatrice Achike are aware of the subjugation that Eugene exercises on them, just like Celie, these women are aware of their abusive environments even though initially it seems that they have no way out. It is through the sisterhood relationships that they are part of, that finally they are encouraged to take a stand and fight their prisons. Not only do these women who refuse to succumb to gender abuse tell the victims there is hope, but their lives are also evidence that women can live as a whole and complete being not chained to men.

Amaka is the total opposite of Kambili, and through observing and spending time with Amaka, Kambili is aware of the possibilities of a girl child being a person of their own without being constantly watched over and dictated to by patriarchal figures. Also. Ifeoma becomes a liberator to Beatrice, even though at first it seems that Beatrice was not interested, eventually she set herself free in a rather disturbing way.

According to Ijeoma (2015:426), Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is a feminist work that challenges the dehumanising tendencies of the menfolk as evident in the character of Mama, who eventually exposed the African conception of an ideal woman who keeps herself dumb to be perceived as a good woman. According to MacInnes (1998), inequality creates masculinity and femininity as ideologies which serve to mask and legitimate inequality. By putting the needs of others and depriving herself fulfilment, the good woman is accepted by her community as a virtuous wife. Beatrice's character displays that silence does not always mean acceptance and the end is often not a sweet one.

In the past and depending on who held the pen, black women have almost exclusively been viewed as the 'other' in terms of negative and regressive stereotypes...Now black women are by themselves in the front of reclaiming their own womanhood, and the arena where their invisibility and misrepresentation is played out is in the novel (Mirza 1992:146).

*Purple Hibiscus* has more of women subordination rather than oppression because according to Sultana (2011:08) subordination does not have the connotation of evil intent on the part of the dominant; it allows for the possibility of collusion between the other and the self. Subordination is the situation in which one is forced to stay under the control of the other.

The first research question sought to find out the influence of patriarchy on Beatrice, Kambili and Celie. The analysis of the texts revealed that patriarchy used religion, culture and education to imprison these female characters. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Eugene hugely depends on religion to impose his authority over his wife and children, most times, he applies double standards and uses religion when it best suits him. Patriarchy in *The Colour Purple* was mostly enforced through traditional gender roles and stereotypes of women. Celie is forced at a young age to already play roles of being a mother and wife, she forcefully gets pregnant through acts of sexual abuse and forced

into marriage by her stepfather. Walker used the perceptions of women and men in patriarchal societies to portray how the protagonist, Celie is subjugated. All these patriarchal tools have shown to be great tools in muting the tongues of marginalised women leaving them with no sense of self-expression.

The second research question looked to investigate the effects of being deprived a voice of your own. Through the characters of Beatrice and Kambili, Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* has shown that being silenced leads to the victim having no sense of individuality as they do not live for themselves but according to the rules set by those in authority. Thus, Jack (1999) says women who are socialised not to be outspoken use silence as a strategy to preserve their agency and sense of self (cf. Bosacki 2005).

Internalised words have shown to be a remedy for disaster, this was seen when Beatrice resorted to poisoning her husband in order to set her family free from the oppressive rule of Eugene. On the other hand, the realisation of new possibilities and support from those around has lead Celie to finally break off the chains of silence. Once she discovers that women can live without depending on men, Celie decides to take a stand and fights for herself, and by leaving to Memphis, becomes a free woman.

This research study has shown that female support systems which are called 'sisterhood' are an important tool in liberating the oppressed. Shug has a feminine gentle and masculine fortitude and independence (Ling 2016:64). When the subjugated woman sees her fellow sisters living an oppression free life, she realises that it is also possible for her to loosen the chains of patriarchal imprisonment. Patriarchal societies need to see the lasting effects of oppressed and depressed victims of abuse, in order to avoid the extreme measures that some of these women end up going to in a quest for freedom.

Klingorova and Havlicek (2015:02) consider gender equality and the emancipation of women as important factors for the economic, social and democratic progress of the world's regions and for the development of human society. Finally, this research study has shown the possibilities of communities which can be re-structured and do away with gender stereotyping.

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