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ANALYSIS OF FEMINIST THOUGHT IN THE WORKS OF MAYA ANGELOU AND TONI
MORRISON

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the feminist thoughts as depicted in the works of black female writers, Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison. Both carry the common theme of describing the black woman and their sufferings in their novels *Beloved* and *I know why the caged bird sings*. Both the writers handle a common feminist criticism. The silence, passivity and resistance of women protagonists are seen active of the feminist criticism.

This paper deals with the concern of celebrating feminism. The representatives of this act with the causes and effects are discussed in detail with a special reference to the novels of Maya Angelo and Toni Morrison. African American women's writing and its impact in the society are immense. The twentieth century has been a revolutionary era for the African American literature because many women writers contributed to the growth of feminist writings during this century. These black writers expressed themselves and created a deep impact on the African American, literary arena. The works of these women writers reflect silence and passivity with self-expression, thus achieving a resistance status and enriching not only African American but also the American literary world. These writers write not only about themselves, but also about African American women.

African-American literature over the years expressed the individual experiences and observations which have come from within the community. The black literature portrayed only the darker plot unless prominent writes like Toni Morrison, who has depicted the lives of black characters and cultures who struggle with identity, racism and hostility, Langston Hughes, a founder of Harlem Renaissance and Maya Angelou, chronicled her life through her autobiographies, evoke. Modernism has paved the way for it. Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison are the protagonist of their novels representing themselves as the victim of feminist criticism. Both the writers share a common episodes and characters that were central in the author's journey towards self-discovery and maturity. These writers celebrate feminism and use it as a tool in the struggles of African American black women liberation.

Feminist Thought is an idea explored to liberate many feminist theories, from liberal feminism, radical feminism, and Marxist and socialist feminism to care-focused feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, women of color feminisms, and eco feminism. Black feminism is a thought provoking concept consisting of ideas produced by Black women that clarify stand-in figure for the black American women in Troubled Times.

As the result of black feminism liberal feminism arose in order to celebrate rights of women. This thought has emerged since the early 18th century due to the women's movement that sued and criticized mistreatments, inequity, exploitation, violence and oppression by men.

Beloved is not a chronological tale. It is a memoir, memories of the past. The novel is written in a broken fractions and pieces for the readers to place the track and understand it. *Beloved* is a fictional story and is well told through Morrison's view and creativity. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is an autobiographical writing of Maya Angelou's life. She is the narrator describing her own experiences of life with an interesting plot.

The titles of these novels have great importance. *Beloved* is an ironic title, because the title refers to a character to be loved but the character was murdered because of the fear of slavery. The name of Sethe's daughter was *Beloved* and she was murdered by her. Thus the character of *Beloved* reflects the melancholic conditions of slave as they preferred to die then to be slaves. *Beloved* is the representative of **whole black community** being inhibited at the hands of whites.

The title *I Know Why the Caged Birds Sings*, is about the sufferings of a black lady to get **freedom**. The cage represents the restrictions and difficulties of life and the song of the bird is the scream and struggle of bird to get out of the cage. Main characters of both the novels are in contrast with each other. **Beloved** is the main character in the novel *Beloved* which is in contrast with each other. **Beloved** is the main character in the novel *Beloved* which is in contrast with **Maya** in *I Know why the caged birds sings*. The plot plays around the main characters. The character of **Sethe** is similar to **Momma**, both women are concerned about their children. **Denver** is parallel with **Bailey** and both have care and affection for their sisters. **Paul D** and **Mr. Freeman** are the antagonist of the plot compared as both bring about change in the life of the **Freeman** are the antagonist of the plot compared as both bring about change in the life of the other major characters. The white people are played similar role in both novels and were unfair to the black community.

There is a fine use of symbols and motifs in both novels. In *Beloved* *House number 124* symbolizes a tragically meaning as it shows that the letter three is missing, as the third child was killed by Sethe. The *Ohio River* is of great significance, because the river promises freedom to slaves. Sethe's scar is the remembrance of physical cruelty of slavery. Similarly, various symbols are used in *I know why the caged birds sings*. *Momma's store*, in *Stamps* represents the rewards of hard work and loyalty and the importance of a strong community. The *lavender taffeta dress* symbolizes Maya's lack of love for herself because she suppressed herself to be ugly.

One of the major themes in *Beloved* and *I know why the caged birds sings* is **Identity Crisis, because of black identity** and links theme of **slavery** in *Beloved*. Maya is depicted as symbolic character representing every African-American girl growing in America. She was given different names like by various people because of her ugly appearance. Both the novels move in the same line in portraying the aspects of racial discrimination, displacement, parent child relationship.

In their journey to adulthood, Angelou and Toni realize that their survival rests on believing in their own values, regardless of the low value that her culture places on her race and gender.

Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison are indeed renaissance women. So, the paper comes to the conclusion that both the writers appear to uphold the portrayal of suffering, sacrificing, submissive wife. Through this it is evident that they will not only survive but finally triumph. These aspects encourage the female protagonists (black African-American women) to construct the self-awareness, black women culture, and self identity. In short, these points reflect over the author's views on feminism.

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