

# Ntozake shange

Literature



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Ntozake Shange Shange's work is inspired by the racist circumstances she had to bear with throughout her life as a Black woman. She first encountered racism while studying in an American-German school and it forced her to change her name to an African name. This gave her an emotional and mental emancipation from the shackles of the oppressive patriarchal society she lived in. "... Shange's previously written choreopoem 'For coloured Girls' was controversial in Black communities because it exposed some negative images of black men." (Ray, Kundu & Dey, 2005, p. 159)

Her identity as an African woman revealed her revolutionary spirit that forced her to create her own company: For Coloured girls who Considered Suicide. Her works speak of her courage that questions the fate of women, particularly black women who have been subjugated since ever. " Her female characters are usually independent, rebellious and evolving, and are responsible for their own liberation and completeness." (Effiong, 2000, p. 130)

Her poetry and other literary works are about pain and suffering as viewed from a woman's point of view. Her most famous poem: ' For Coloured girls who Considered Suicide/ When the Rainbow is Enuf,' poignantly stirs the conscience of the readers and forces them to think over the global issue of racism and sexism. According to Benston(2000), in her work "... gender and sexuality do not simply occupy the place of the ' self' or the ' other', but join race or class as shifting sites of repetition and difference where the struggle for a nuanced, efficacious black performative can be progressively engaged." (p. 68)

She uses symbolism and imagery in her work to bring out the essence of her  
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emotional and mental turmoil. Her language deviates from the standard and accepted norms of American English and she does so to invoke feelings of sympathy with her carefully selected words. She bemoans the deprivation of female-identity by men: “ My stuff is the anonymous ripped off treasure of the year/ did you know somebody almost got away with me/ me in a plastic bag under their arm/...” (Shange, 2004, p. 2520)

Shange has tried to awaken self-assertiveness in Black women with her revolutionary and progressive literary works. Though she blames men for the sufferings of women, yet she exudes the courage to fight back the patriarchal system and this is one of the reasons why she chose not to have any male character in her famous poem: For Coloured Girls who considered Suicide.

#### References

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