

A short story rosely by alice walker



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

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The most obvious story is the one about the Black American woman Roselily, who stands before the alter, just about to marry a muslim, while she thinks about her past, wonders about the future and is questioning whether she is making the right choice. The other, hidden story is the story about Black American women in general, their history and their ongoing search for something better. The way I understand the short story, Roselily's story is, as it is presented to the reader through Roselily's thoughts as she is in the middle of her wedding, a reflection of Black Americans` and women in particular situation around the 1960s.

At this time, Blacks are free Americans with the equal rights as other Americans, in theory. Roselily is an independent woman of her time, but being a single mother of four children, working long hours for most likely lousy wages in a sewing plant, she is far from free. The Blacks are no longer slaves in the cotton fields, they are now paid slaves in the refinement industry. Roselily is most aware of her situation, and she is willing to leave her past and start a new life with a new man. She has probably been searching for a better life for quite some time, by being with different men, who all could give her a child, but not a new life.

I am sensing an urge in Roselily, to move on, symbolized by all the cars described in the short story: They are constantly moving from one place to another, they give you mobility, prevent you from being stuck somewhere you do not want to be. Roselily knows that she does not want to stay in the sewing plant, she knows that she wants to move on to something better, but she does not know what better is, and she certainly doubts if what she has chosen will be better than what she had. Her divided personality is like the different groups of Blacks in the civil rights movements.

Some Blacks wanted segregation, some wanted their own nation, some wanted to be more African, some wanted to live like the White Americans, some were Muslims and some were Christians. They all agreed that their current situation was not acceptable, but they did not know how to improve it. At the same time as Roselily wants to start a new life, she is afraid of losing her roots. She pictures her children « exalted on a pedestal, a stalk that has no roots», and « She wonders how to make new roots».

Alice Walker here describes Black Americans and probably also her own search for identity. Which heritage is the right one; the one from their Black American ancestors, or the one from the African ancestors? As *Roselily* is about to marry, about to go to Chicago and start a new life with her husband, she is starting to regret her decision and faces the truth: Just like Black Americans went from the slavery in the cotton fields to paid slavery in the sewing plants, she is now moving to the slavery of Islam. She thinks of his religion and sees ropes, chains, handcuffs.

She thinks of Chicago, her new home, and realizes that all she knows about the place is Lincoln, the president. President Lincoln abolished the slavery, but that did not free the Black Americans. Alice Walker shows feminism in this literature. Most of her works depict racism, sexism, feminism, troubled relationships, and isolation. Alice Walker was the eighth child of sharecroppers. Despite the economic hardships of her family, she was remarkably dedicated to her education and graduated with degrees from both Sarah Lawrence and Spelman College.

While attending school, Walker became frustrated with the lack of literature on the culture and history of the black experience, so she challenged educational institutions to create a representative curriculum. In the 1960s, she became involved in the civil rights movement. Her experiences became the basis for her excellent novel *Meridian*. Her best-known work, however, is *The Color Purple*. Critics and audiences alike have praised its richly drawn female characters and seemingly effortless use of black vernacular. Although she has written six novels, Walker remains very active politically, championing women's issues and women's work.