

Poetry and u.s women movement explicatory essay

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Women have been known to face oppression since time immemorial. The feminist groups came up in as early as the late 1960s to speak up against the oppression of women. These feminist groups took various forms of speaking up for these rights. Poetry was one of these ways. The power of the spoken and written word is known to possess infinite power. Slogans like “The Personal is Political” came up around this time too.

This slogan has been under scrutiny for the longest time, with various scholars trying to delve both the plutonic and deeper meaning. Kelly observes that the phrase the personal is political was conceived as connecting the women’s experience of exploitation and oppression as political issues (p. 122). This work seeks to look into the works of a poet and how they incorporated the phrase and its meaning into their works.

The concept of the personal being the political in a woman’s life is one that never gets tired or obsolete. It is a concept that defies time and is always relevant regardless of time and space. It applies to every woman as women are still facing some of the issues that these feminists were protesting against back then. This concept means that most of the personal problems that women undergo are not in their making or fault but are brought about by systematic oppression (Winter, para. 5).

This means that women are not to blame for things they go through; also women should not feel guilty, contrary to what many of the women are brought up knowing. Many women in different cultures are put down and made to feel bad. All this is because they are women and that they exhibit

female traits that are natural. Women are made to feel stupid, weak, emotionless, hysterical, mad and ashamed of their sexuality.

For the longest time, the society has sought to bring women down and lock them in cocoons so that they suppress their real power and potential. In many cultures, even today, women are still not allowed to hold leadership positions since they are considered weak and emotional hence they are prone to poor judgment.

The phrase “ The personal is Political” establishes the notion that most problems that women are said to have are not their fault. This has only been forced upon the women. The phrase is still relevant in the world today as women are still not yet liberated totally. In fact, some are still bound by unreasonable cultures that demean their rights and dignity.

Thesis Statement: The poet Janice Mirikitani was protesting against the issues Violence, anger and silence which women put up with, as she argues the phrase “ The Personal is Political.”

In her poem “ Breaking Tradition”, Janice Mirikitani explores how every woman has a secret longing to break out of the inhibitions and restrictions that society locks them in and to break the shackles of silence, violence and anger that haunt them. This poem shows how each generation of women wants to break out of the cocoon they have grown up in, and which has also sucked their own mothers. Mirikitani brings out the issue of forced silence very strongly in this poem.

Line seventeen says “ I am like my mother she kept her room neat with silence” and goes on “ defiance smothered, passion and loudness wrapped, steps confined...” Such phrases are used to bring out the reality that women were there to be seen and not heard. Their opinions and feelings did not matter in any setting or environment. Most Mirikitani’s poems cry out in protest against the internally or externally imposed silence on women (Lashgari p. 292). Mirikitani says in her poem: “ Guilt was passed in our bones.”

This means that women are brainwashed to think that they cannot think on their own and challenge existing ideals in the society. Therefore, they are forced to silence by that inward guilt. Externally, the society seeks to suppress the potential of women by making them feel stupid for possessing ideas, which promptly ensures they remain silent.

It is anger that pushes the persona in the poem to free her daughter. The persona understands the implications that the political aspect has had on her private life and how the two are interconnected. She wants to free her daughter from the same and ensure that she never has to face the same. She “ wants to tell her daughter of the room and about herself”. Knowledge is power, and it is the only way women will be liberated.

The society has managed to keep women in shackles by withholding the truth from them. The truth about what women is that, they are not weak, stupid, and useless. Also, they can contribute to the society just like their counterparts, the men. The poem uses imagery of an open window that

provides possible escape from the cocoon. Mirikitani has had her own share of the political influencing her private life.

The poet is embittered by her parent's silence about what she went through while at a tender age. This is because of having survived violence and sexual molestation at a tender age (Ho & Antonio, p. 376). That anger pushed her to fight for the liberation of women. Though she represents the persona in the poem, we cannot help but notice her desire to enlighten her own daughter. She looks determined to free her daughter from the prison of silence and oppression in which the society wants to imprison her.

The last part of the poem portrays civilization and a breaking of traditional ways and culture. The daughter of the persona is engaging in activities that the society she comes from might not approve. She is dancing to modern music " Salsa, the Stones and Teena Marie". Mirikitani says that her daughter is copying her. She is breaking tradition and thus she will become free. The mere act of her daughter mirrors her own desires and wishes, and in this, she finds hope.

It is without question that women are not yet totally liberated, especially in some parts of the world, but we cannot ignore the fact that this liberation process has made quite some milestones. Women these days can be listened to in the society, some of the practices that undermined their dignity has been done away with globally.

The most glaring impact is in the fact that women can now take up leadership positions in societies, organizations, local government and even

nationally. The battle for the liberation of women is still ongoing, but there is hope that women will one day be totally liberated and that the political affecting the personal will be a thing of the past.

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